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STORY OF NATIONS

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MANORAMA
TELL ME WHY
June 2019 • Volume: 13 • No: 06
FROM THE HOUSE OF MAGIC POT, THE WEEK, MANORAMA YEARBOOK VANITHA & THE MALAYALA MANORAMA DAILY

NATIONS OF THE WORLD

Take a close look at the world map. How many countries can you count? Ever wondered how all these countries came to exist?

Since time immemorial, Man has always had a zeal to discover new lands. This driving spirit has shaped human history; it has pushed Man to explore new places, and establish new settlements. The quest was not always easy. It was often a hard journey that sometimes ended in fearsome battles.

The shape of the human world has changed drastically. Countless nations have been born, flourished and vanished from the face of the earth and each country holds centuries of eventful history. In the last hundred years, many boundaries were redrawn and redefined -sometimes divided, at times unified- due to various complex reasons like politics, power hunger and greed.

This issue of *Tell Me Why* gives you the stories of several nations across the world, taking you through a historical journey.

AUSTRALIA AND THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

Why did settlers come to Australia and the Pacific islands?

The British expanded their colonies all over the world in search of natural resources and wealth. Australia was no exception.

The British came to Australia and the Pacific islands to exploit the mineral wealth

of these countries. Nauru was mined for phosphate while some other islands had nickel and bauxite. Many islands were fertile and were utilised for plantations, especially sugarcane.

Many English convicts were sent to some of these islands including Australia and New Zealand as punishment for their crimes. To survive, these people had to struggle with the harsh weather, difficult terrains and the natives.

The continent of Australia now consists of fourteen countries spread across the Pacific Ocean. Australia, New Zealand and thousands of tiny islands are collectively known as Oceania. Today, many of these islands are bustling tourist destinations.

Opera House, Sydney

Why did the British settle in Australia?

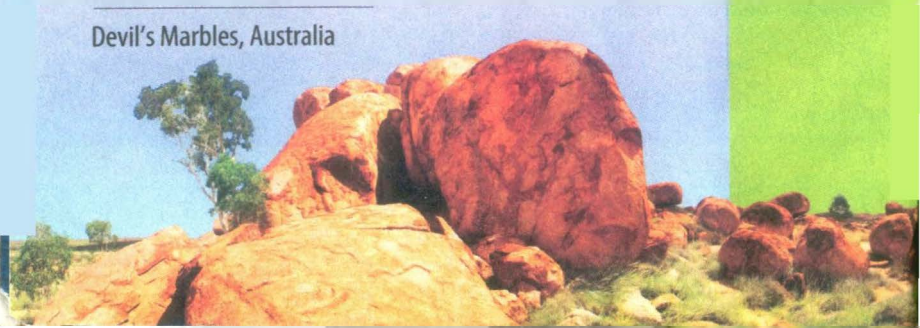
Australia is unique in many ways. The country has pink lakes like Lake Hillier. It has more than ten thousand beaches. There are more kangaroos than people in the country. The Great Barrier Reef, the largest living structure in the world is in Australia. It also shares a legacy with many other countries in the world- Australia too was once a British colony!

Australia was inhabited by the Aboriginals alone till the British settlers came. In the 1700s, criminals of Britain were given two options- either to die or to live in the difficult bushes of the newfound continent. As many as 700 convicts were sent to Australia in the beginning, who struggled hard to survive the harsh climate, the difficult land and of course, the Aboriginals. More convicts were transported and Australia became an established penal colony of the British. By the 1800s, there were many such penal colonies.

The 1850s witnessed a historical discovery! Gold was discovered in Victoria which created a boom. The Victorian gold rush was so massive that the government had to resort to issuing miners' licenses to regulate the crowd.

Island Continent

Due to its large size and isolation from the rest of the world, Australia is sometimes known as the 'island continent'.



Devil's Marbles, Australia

AUSTRALIA

Sydney Harbour Bridge

How did the ban on the White Australia policy give shape to the Australia that we know today?

Like many other British colonies, Australia too experienced the ill effects of racism. The British settlers wanted to establish White supremacy over the country.

Moreover, traders from Asian countries, especially China were posing a threat to the British trade. To counter it, the government came up with the White Australia Policy in 1901. The policy banned all non-White immigrants.

The White Australia Policy was in the rule books till the 1960s. It was ultimately banned in 1966 and the country invited immigrants from all parts of the world. It also opened its gates to the refugees of the Vietnam war! People all over the world now move in to Australia for quality education and employment. And it has people of all races; 26 percent of its population are immigrants!

NEW ZEALAND

How did the British establish themselves in New Zealand?

New Zealand is a country spread across the Pacific Ocean, near Australia. It is made up of two large islands- North and South islands.

The history of New Zealand cannot be told without mentioning the British interventions. Abel Tasman, a Dutch explorer was the first European to discover the island. With the arrival of Captain James Cook, Britishers founded Wellington in the North island. New Zealand became a British colony in 1840. Maoris were the original inhabitants of the island. William Hobson, New Zealand's first governor made an agreement with 500 Maori chiefs to establish British sovereignty over the country. This landmark document is known as the Treaty of Waitangi. This treaty helped the British to establish their government.

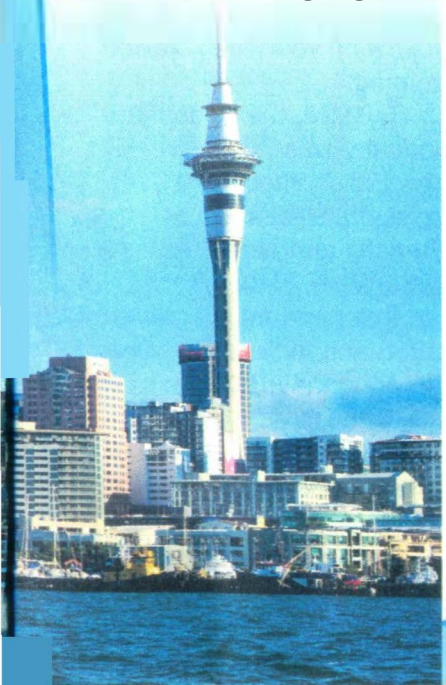
New Zealander

Remember Edmund Hillary? The one who climbed Mount Everest for the first time along with Tenzing Norgay? Edmund Hillary was from New Zealand.

Waitangi Day celebration

How did the Treaty of Waitangi change the story of New Zealand?

By 1860, the Maoris were forced to give up their lands for establishing settlements. This was a result of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. This led to a brutal war in the North Island. The war lasted for twenty years, thousands of Maoris were killed and much of their land was confiscated.



Though the Maoris waged many wars against the British, they stayed loyal to the British crown. They even fought for the British in their war against South Africa. This happened in 1890, almost ten years after the conflict.

New Zealand became an independent dominion in 1907, but it maintained strong political and economic links with the United Kingdom.

Today New Zealand attracts people all over the world with quality education and employment.

NAURU

How did Nauru become one of the richest countries in the world for some time?

Nauru is a tiny coral island in the Pacific Ocean. It is one of the smallest independent nations of the world. Not much was known about this island country until the whale hunters started halting at Nauru for collecting food and water. Nauru came under German control by 1888.

The people of Nauru thrived on fishing and small scale farming. Little did they know that their life was going to change when they discovered phosphate deposits in its plateaus.

There was a heavy demand for phosphate in England for making chemical fertilisers and the Pacific Phosphate Company owned by the British made an agreement with the German administration to mine the phosphate deposits in Nauru. This happened in1906 and in the following year, they started mining.

By 1920, the phosphate industry was taken over by the British Phosphate Commission, a joint Australian, British, and New Zealand enterprise. Nauru became an independent country in 1968 and took control over its phosphate business by 1970; the money from phosphate made Nauru one of the richest countries in the world.

How did phosphate change Nauru's economy and environment?

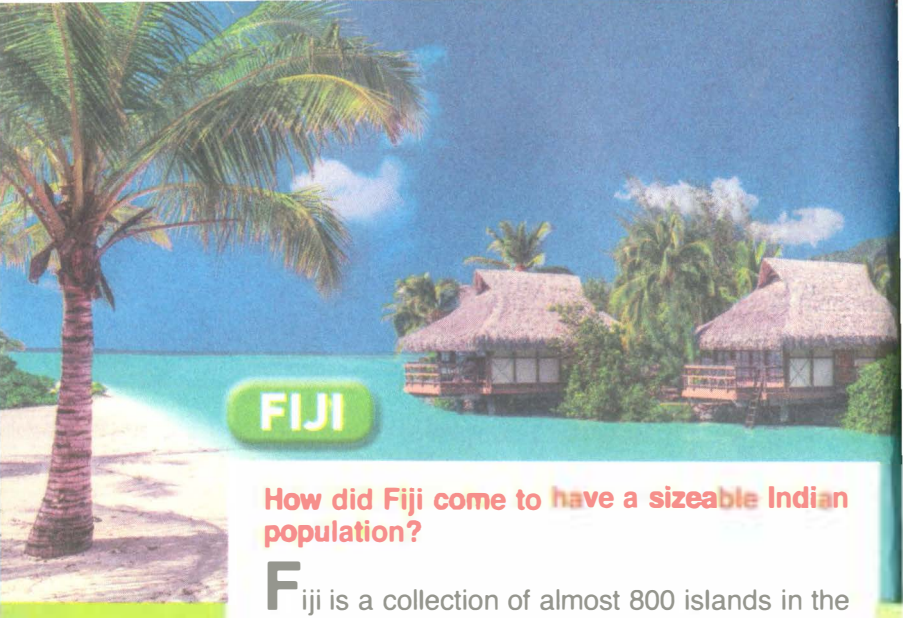
Nauru had to pay a heavy price for the riches it mined. By the end of the twentieth century, phosphate mines started to run dry.

The money from mining was invested in various businesses abroad. Unfortunately, this turned out to be a failure that left Nauru bankrupt. Its telecommunications network collapsed in 2003 and the country was cut off from the rest of the world for nearly two months!

Moreover, more than 80 percent of the island became infertile due to extensive mining. In 1993, the Nauru Rehabilitation Corporation filed a case in the International Court of Justice to claim compensation from Australia for the exploitation of its phosphate resources. Both the countries later came to a friendly settlement. Today, the people of Nauru are tirelessly working to make its land once again suitable for agriculture.

No Capital

Nauru is the only republican state in the world without an official capital.



FIJI

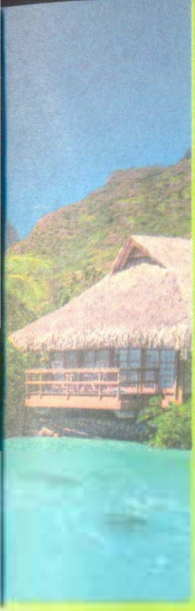
How did Fiji come to have a sizeable Indian population?

Fiji is a collection of almost 800 islands in the Pacific Ocean, out of which only ten are inhabited. Fiji became a British colony in 1874. It had only its native population till the British established many sugar plantations in the nineteenth century. More people were needed to work in the plantations. To solve this crisis, workers were brought from India who later settled there.

Fiji gained independence in 1974. The country was racially divided between the native Fijians and the Indians. They waged political wars. Fijians came up with a constitution in 1990 that assured political power to the natives. However, they still had clashes; they had civilian and military rule subsequently. Fiji now follows the constitution charted in 2013. Today, Fiji is a popular tourist destination.

Master Golfer

One of Fiji's most successful sportsmen is professional golfer Vijay Singh. He won three major golf championships.



KIRIBATI

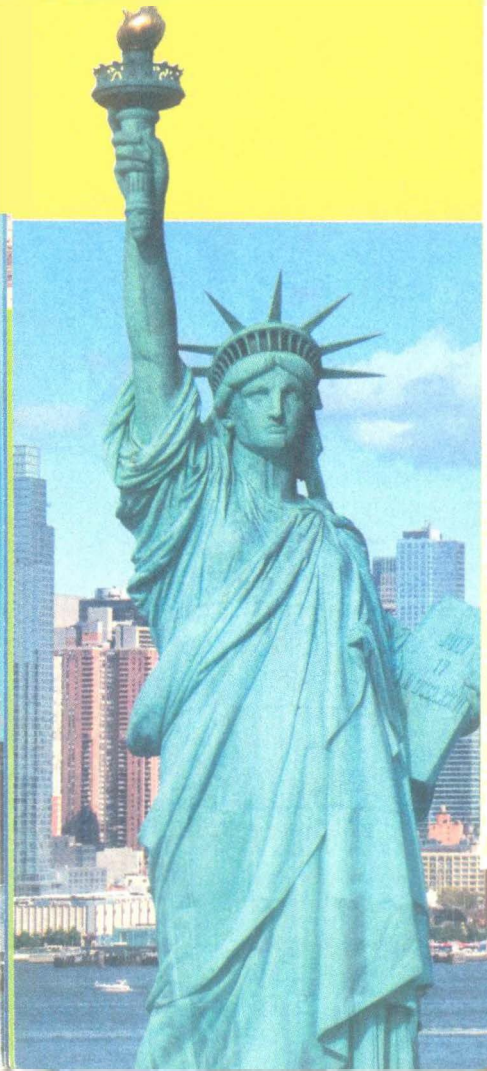
Which country got its name along with its independence?

Kiribati got its name along with its independence. The birth of the new nation was celebrated with the new name which in fact is the local pronunciation of Gilbert Island, its old name. Kiribati is a group of 33 islands in the central Pacific. This archipelago was named after an English explorer Thomas Gilbert.

Whalers were the first people to come to the island. Though Spanish explorers visited the island, the British colonized it. Japan occupied Kiribati during the Second World War. It became independent in 1979. But there were ethnic tensions between the inhabitants.

Banaba, a Kiribatian island had phosphate deposits which were exploited by the British. The Banabans filed a case against the British government for compensation for the environmental devastation. In 1981, Britain offered ten million Australian dollars to close the case which they agreed to. A commercial satellite-launch platform was established in the 1990s which is the island's major source of income.

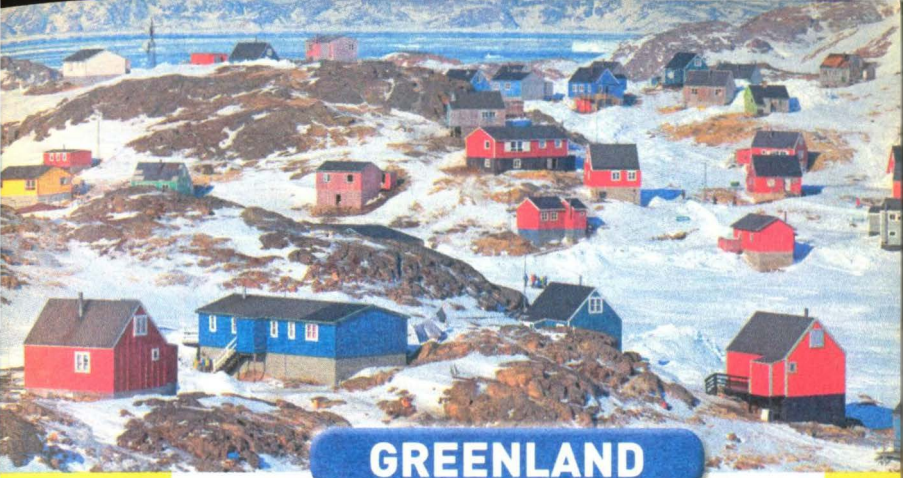
NORTH AMERICA



What do the countries of North America have in common?

North America has countries with all kinds of cultures, languages, economies and geography. But all these countries share a common history when it comes to its relation with Europe. All the countries of North America were controlled by European colonizers at one point or the other, mainly British and French. Independence was won after years of war and struggles. Some countries still have their European connections though.

The United States is the most developed country in North America. The central American and Carribean countries are much poorer than the US or Canada. Many of these countries have had a period of dictatorship and military rule as well.



GREENLAND

Why is Greenland named so?

The name Greenland is quite misleading. It gives you an image of a stretch of lush green land, but the island is actually full of glaciers. The island was earlier inhabited by the Vikings. Their king Erik the Red named the island 'Greenland' to attract settlers from Europe. It is the world's largest island, but holds one of the smallest populations.

Greenland was first inhabited by convicts who had escaped from Iceland. They were succeeded by the Vikings and later by the Norse. Later, Hans Egede formed a colony in Greenland in 1776 with due permission from Denmark. Till 1950, the Danish enjoyed monopoly over Greenland. After regular complaints from Greenlanders, Denmark granted them the power of self-governance in 2009.

Third Largest

North America is the third largest continent in world, ranking just below Asia and Africa which are the first and second largest continents, respectively.

Capitol Building, Washington, D.C.

USA

How did the United States of America take shape?

The United States of America that we know today took shape from a small colony called Jamestown! The journey from a tiny colony to the world's superpower was not easy. It all started when the British settlers came to America in the1500s. Before them, natives from Eurasia occupied the country and had been living there for at least thirty thousand years.

MEXICO

How did Spain and the US play a role in the history of Mexico?

Mexico is famous for many reasons. Mexico is the homeland of chocolate.Mexicans celebrate the Day of the Dead, when the dead are believed to come to life again. The famous movie 'Book of Life' is based on this festival.

The history of Mexico is scripted by the Aztecs, Mayans, Spanish and the Americans who changed the life and living of its people. After three hundred years of Spanish colonization, Mexico gained independence in 1821.

Mexico was a farming nation. This changed as industries

After years of struggle and hard labour, the British established thirteen colonies by the 1700s. Britain imposed heavy taxes on the colonies which created tension. The colonies rebelled against their masters. However, they were not alone to fight Britain. They were backed up by France. The eight year rebellion against taxes that started in 1775 is known as the American Revolutionary War. In the end, America broke free from Britain and the colonies began to be known as the United States or US.

The US is the oldest surviving federation. It has 50 States, a federal district- Washington D.C., five major territories and several minor islands.

Chichen Itza, Mexico

dominated the landscape. The country had troubled relations with the US since independence. The major issues were concerning borders.

The US fought wars with Mexico to take control over Texas under the leadership of president James K Polk. Texas was earlier a part of Mexico which they lost in war. In 1994, president Bill Clinton ordered the building of a border wall; it created a lot of tension.

Apart from this, Mexico had to deal with several internal issues like drug trafficking and inflation.

Old and New

Today's Mexico City was once the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan.

Why is the Border Wall famous?

Border issues have always caused trouble between Mexico and US. The wall was built to deal with issues like illegal immigration, human trafficking, smuggling and other activities related to the drug market. The border is 3,145 km long and it is protected by a manmade fence for more than 934 kilometres, with 48 border crossings. Most of it was built after 2006.

It also has an impact on the economy. Mexico exports tonnes of vegetables, fruits, meat and alcohol to the US. Some American companies have mining licenses in Mexico. The Border wall is in news once again since Donald Trump was elected as the president of the US.Trump recently proclaimed to shut the wall if Mexicans do not stop illegal migration. But this would adversely affect America. The shutting of the wall would stop the legal trade between the countries as well. If the wall is shut, the US would soon run out of avocados! Mexico exports all the avocados America needs. The list also include blue jeans and TVs!

CANADA

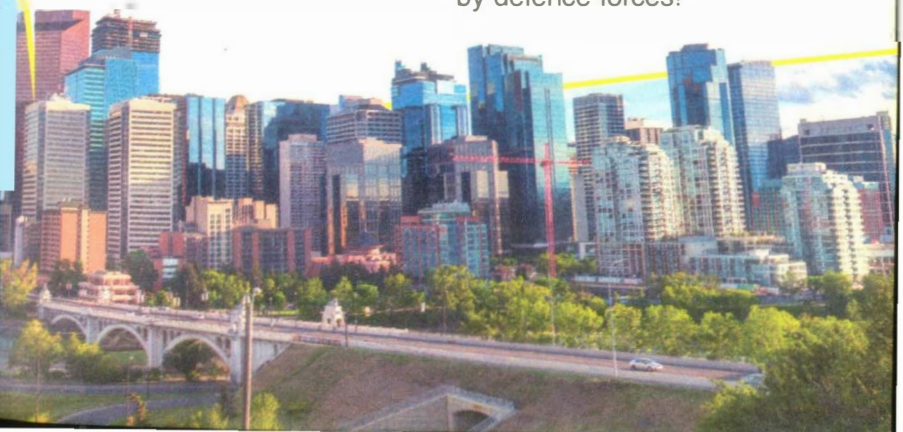
Which revolution gave shape to the Canada that we know today?

The birth of modern Canada is revolutionary. However, it did not involve much violence.

A series of intense socio-political changes popularly known as the 'Quiet Revolution' gave shape to the Canada that we know today. Canada was a British settlement. In the 1960s, the Liberal government led a series of social, political and cultural reforms and made the government secular. The Liberal government gained control over the education system, established more public institutions and provided better education to its citizens. Canada is one of the most educated countries in the world.

The reformers improved health care services and nationalised many sectors including electricity. These reforms improved the economy and quality of life in Canada which attracted more and more immigrants.

Canada was first explored by the Vikings. The Vikings were followed by the British and the French. Britain took most of the French land to create two colonies. Gold was discovered later in Klondike which created a rush. Canada is now a parliamentary democracy with constitutional monarchy; Queen Elizabeth heads the country. The US tried to invade Canada twice without any success. Surprisingly, today Canada and the US share the longest international border that is not patrolled by defence forces!



GUATEMALA

Why did Guatemala have a civil war?

The story of Guatemala is written in blood. The country had one of the worst civil wars in the world which lasted for 36 years.

Guatemala gained independence from its Spanish colonizers in 1839. By the 1950s, president Arbenz led land reforms that aimed at improving the lives of the peasants. A majority of the farmlands were controlled by the United Fruit Company, an organisation funded by the US. The land reforms affected them adversely. In addition to that, the growth of communism in Guatemala was seen as a threat by the US. The US intervened to overthrow Arbenz. Castillo Armas became the new president. He stopped the reforms and broke all peasant unions. For the next 36 years, the country witnessed war. In 1996, the United Nations intervened to end the war and establish peace.

Independence

Guatemala's Independence Day is celebrated on September 15th every year to commemorate it's independence from Spain.

National Palace, Guatemala

BELIZE

What is the new name of British Honduras?

British Honduras is now known as Belize. It got its new name in 1973. As its old name suggests, it was a colony of Britain before gaining independence. The British settlers came there following a shipwreck. Seeing that the land was suitable for agriculture, they started a colony in Belize under the name British Honduras. Before that, the land was claimed by Spain.

The Spanish believed that Belize was a part of Guatemala. This land dispute started in the 1520s and surprisingly, it did not end even after Belize gained independence.

Belize became an independent nation in 1981. Though they were free from the clutches of the colonizers, they were regularly disturbed by Guatemalans who believed that Belize was a part of their country.

British army regularly protected Belize from these attacks. Guatemala still claims its rights on Belize. In 2008, both countries agreed to put the case before the International Court of Justice. The final decision regarding the case has not come out yet.

HAITI

Which country was mistaken for India by Columbus?

When Christopher Columbus first landed in Haiti, he mistook the island for India. After the Italians and the Spanish, the French set up a colony in western Haiti and ran sugar plantations successfully. Slaves were brought from Africa to work for the French masters.

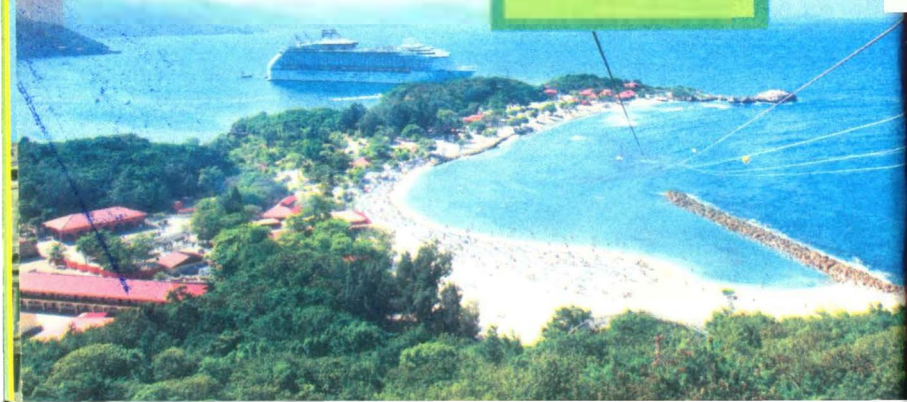
After years of slavery, Haitians revolted against their French leaders and became an independent nation in 1804. Haiti was being ruled by different inefficient governments since then till the US occupied the country.

The US occupied the country from 1915 to 1934 and tried to restore order. But this did not solve the issue. A military regime governed Haiti till 1994. The country had elected governments occasionally which were soon overthrown by military coups. Finally, in 1994, democracy was restored in Haiti after a successful negotiation between the coup leaders and the US officials.

Haiti is often hit by the worst kind of natural calamities. Tropical storms, earthquakes, mudslides, hurricanes and flash floods have taken the lives of thousands of Haitians. The damages caused by these disasters have often left the country in a state of emergency.

Third Largest

Haiti is the third-largest country in the Caribbean.



Ball Court, Copan, Honduras

HONDURAS

Which country is known as the first 'Banana republic'?

Can a country be named as 'Banana republic'? Well, history says yes. In the late nineteenth century, there was a widespread banana craze in the US. The Latin American countries exported bananas to the US to satiate its crazy banana appetite. The first country to be known as 'Banana republic' is Honduras!

Honduras was colonized by the Spanish. After gaining independence in 1838, the country was ruled primarily by a set of dictators. Later in the 19th century, several American companies set up banana plantations in Honduras which shaped its economy. The plantation workers revolted time and again against the oppressive working conditions that prevailed in the country. They also fought wars against their neighbours El Salvador and Nicaragua. In 1984, Honduras sought American help to bring peace to the country.

Banana exports declined in 1994 which created an economic crisis in Honduras. To add fuel to the fire, a hurricane named Mitch hit the country. It killed many of its people and destroyed farmlands.

Environmental Policy

Costa Rica is also noted for its environmental policies. It vowed to become the first carbon neutral country by 2020. The country is a true example of sustainable development!

EL SALVADOR

Why did El Salvador have a civil war?

El Salvador is one of the smallest countries in Central America. It was colonized by Spain. The Spanish had lots of indigo plantations. The harsh conditions in the plantations led to a revolt and the country gained independence in 1821.

For years after independence, the country experienced a number of wars against other countries in Central America. Military dictatorships prevailed for more than forty years from 1931 to 1979. Wealthy landowners and the army controlled the country and the poor suffered misery. This inequality led to civil war in 1980 which lasted for twelve years. When the war ended in 1992, about 75,000 Salvadorans were killed. The war ended when the rebels and the government signed a peace treaty which guaranteed political reforms. These reforms improved conditions of the country.

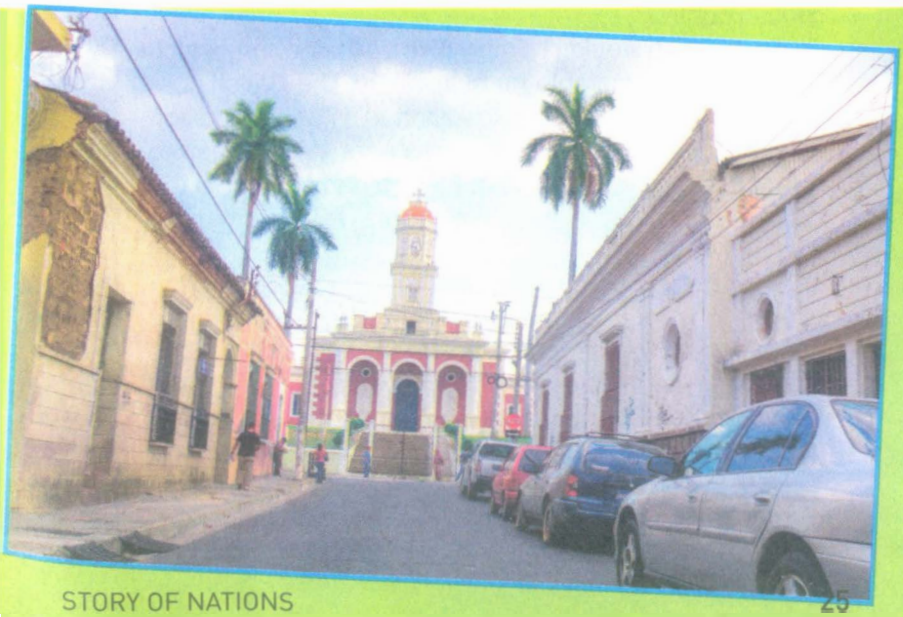
COSTA RICA

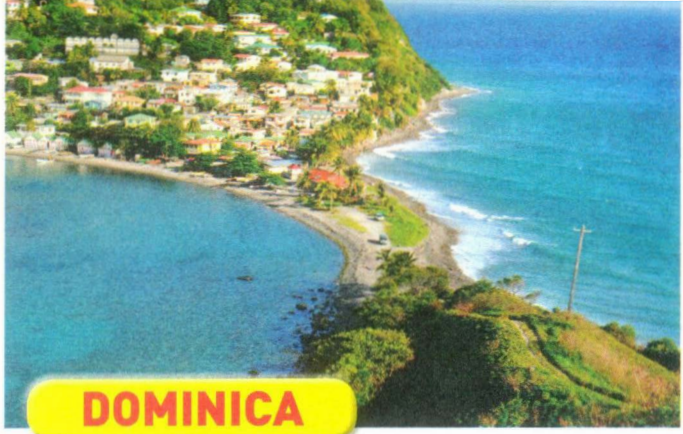
Which country dismantled its army after civil war?

Costa Rica is one of the most peaceful and stable countries in Latin America. It's a model democratic state now.

The name Costa Rica was given by Christopher Columbus. He thought that the land had lots of gold. This name, which means rich coast in Spanish, attracted settlers to the country. Costa Rica was controlled by the Spanish before they chose to side with the Mexican empire. Later, they gained independence in 1838. Since then, Costa Rica took the road to progress. Coffee plantations created a boom and the money obtained from it was used to modernise the country.

Though democracy continued uninterrupted in Costa Rica, for many years, it had a two-year military dictatorship from 1917-19 when General Federico Tinoco Granados became the dictator. They also had a civil war that broke out in 1948.





DOMINICA

How did Dominica come under British control?

Dominica is named after the Latin word for Sunday. But who would name a country after a day? Columbus did, because he spotted the island on a Sunday in 1493. The French and the Spanish were early birds to set up colonies in Dominica. By 1763, the island came under British control.

The French wouldn't simply give up their colony which had fertile soil suitable for cultivation. The British conquered the island in an expedition in 1761. In addition to that, Britain won the Seven Years War defeating France, Spain and Portugal. France had to give up the island to the British because of this, in the Treaty of Paris of 1763.

After setting up colonies, the British started to bring slaves to work in plantations. Many slaves died under the inhuman treatment of the British masters. In 1833, slavery was abolished which improved the lives of plantation workers. Dominicans gained authority one step at a time and in 1978, they gained full independence and control over their affairs. Since then, Dominica is a parliamentary democracy that has elected representatives.

JAMAICA

Which is the first Carribean country to launch a website?

Every year, there is a huge inflow of tourists to Jamaica to enjoy its warm climate and sandy beaches. No wonder, Jamaica is the first Carribean country to launch a website- www.jamaicatravel.com. Tourism created a boom in the country after its independence in 1962. Before that, Jamaica was a crown colony of Britain.

When the British arrived, Jamaica was ruled by the Spanish. Britain seized control from them in the 1600s and turned it into a huge slave market. The demand for slaves was high as there were many sugar plantations. Time and again, the slaves rose against their masters which led to many revolts. Many struggles later, Jamaica won independence and set up parliament.

The Jamaican government worked to develop the infrastructure, technology and teacher education using the money obtained from tourism. Jamaica had good market relations with Britain.

PANAMA

How did the Panama Canal change the history of Panama?

Panama is a tiny country. But its importance is way greater than its size. Panama controls the Panama Canal, a commercial waterway that links the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans.

Panama Canal

This canal has not only helped vessels cross the oceans with great ease, but also has made the country rich. Most of its people work at the canal. The vessels passing through the canal have to pay a toll which contributes to the country's GDP.

Panama was first explored by the Spanish and was later conquered by Native Americans. It became a province of Colombia in 1821 and later broke free in 1903 with the help of the US. Later, US took charge of Central Panama to build the canal. Panama Canal started functioning in 1914. Though America gave back the land in 1979, the canal was under their control till 1999. Panama took control over the canal in 2000 which led to great economic development.

CUBA

Why is Fidel Castro an important figure in the history of Cuba?

Cuba is a socialist state controlled by the Cuban Communist Party.

In the 1940s and 50s, Cuba was under military rule led by Fulgencio Batista. In 1959, Fidel Castro overthrew the Batista government and took political and military power in his hands. He broke off ties with the US and formed alliance with the Soviet Union. The US tried to invade Cuba many times, but could not succeed in its attempts.

During his rule, Castro nationalised almost all sectors including factories and oil refineries. He worked to improve education and healthcare. But Cubans had many restrictions too. They were not allowed to own cellphones till 2008. The first Wifi hotspot was set up in 2015. Cubans were not allowed to even own private vehicles for a brief period!

El Cocodrilo

Cuba is often referred to in Spanish as "El Cocodrilo" or "El Caimá" because its shape resembles a crocodile when seen from the air.

SOUTH AMERICA

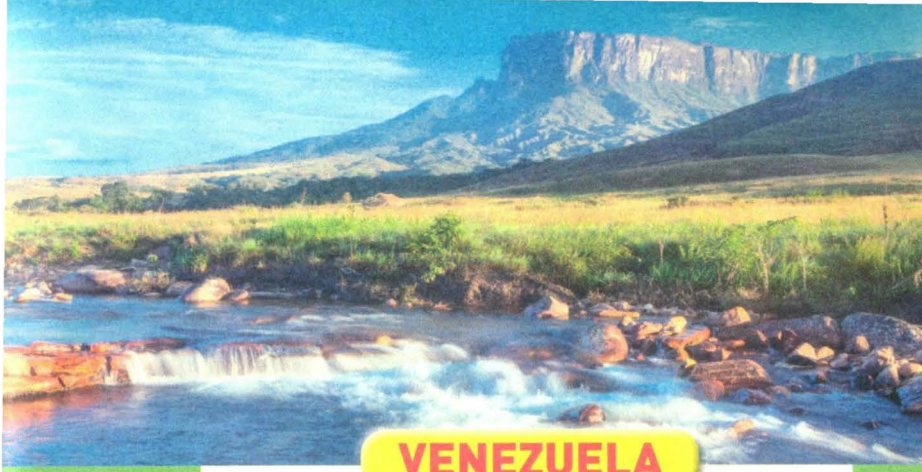
It's Large

The largest lake in South America is located in Venezuela. Lake Maracaibo, 20 to 40 million years old, is also one of the oldest lakes on Earth.

Who were the early settlers of South America?

People lived in the continent of South America at least 11,000 years ago. Many civilizations developed there, the most brilliant among them being the Incas. The Incan empire was destroyed by the Spanish conquerors. Europeans, especially the Spanish and the Portuguese flooded the continent. They amassed wealth, leaving the Native Americans poor.

By the 1800s, these settlements collapsed and many independent nations were born after a series of bloody wars. These nations had to suffer slavery, riots, civil war, poverty and dictatorship at one point or the other. Today, South America consists of twelve sovereign states, French Guyana which is a part of France and the disputed overseas territory of Britain known as Falkland.



VENEZUELA

Why is Venezuela facing an economic emergency?

Oil once made Venezuela rich beyond expectations; it was one of the richest Latin American countries which obtained half of its earnings from the oil industry. However, the oil prices began to drop from the 1960s.

The demand for oil declined day by day. The value of Venezuelan currency came down drastically. The government tried to diversify and develop new industries, but there was no change in the situation. There was a heavy crisis of food supplies and the government did not have enough money to import sufficient food products. The inflation worsened, thus creating an economic emergency. Eighty five percent of the population became poor with minimal food supplies and practically no medical aid.

Oil prices fell heavily in 2015. Venezuela is facing the highest inflation in the world, even worse than the Great Depression in the US in the 1930s.

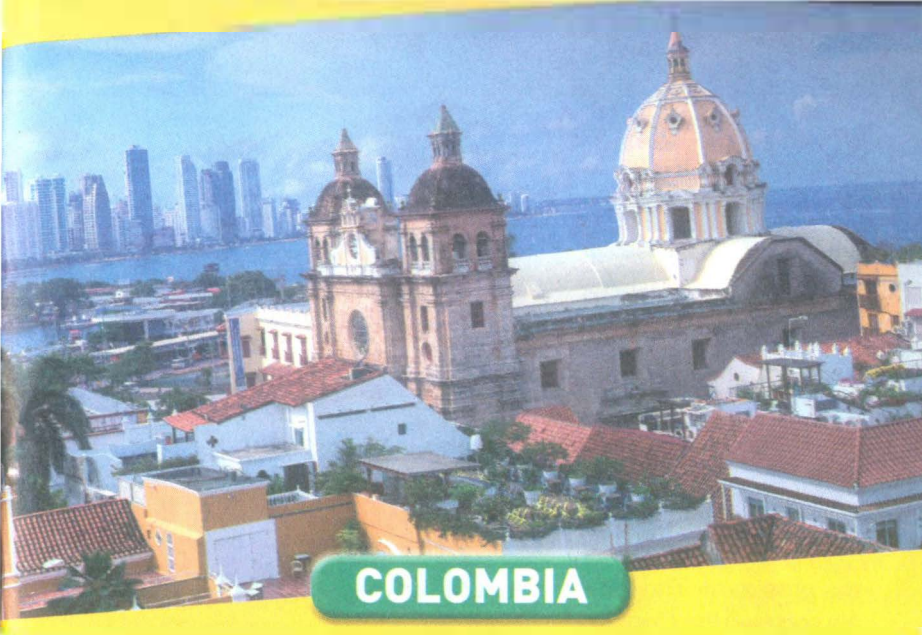
CHILE

Why is Augusto Pinochet important to the history of Chile?

Chile looks like a fluttering ribbon in the world map. It's the world's longest and thinnest country. Chile gained independence from the colonial clutches of Spain and became independent in 1818.

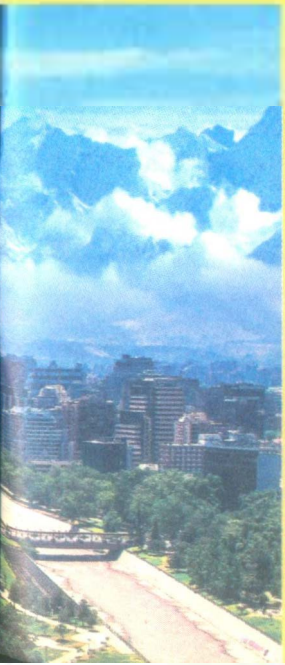
Since independence, the political views that governed the country oscillated between the right and left wings. Chile has had economic problems since the twentieth century. Salvador Allende, their elected president tried to resolve many of its problems during his socialist government. The economic problems intensified in the 1970s. Allende was overthrown in 1973 by a military coup and Chile came under the control of the military general Augusto Pinochet.

Pinochet was a tyrannical dictator. He suspended parliament and banned all sorts of political activity. Chileans did not have civil liberty; thousands of Chileans were imprisoned, tortured and executed without any reason. Many others were either expelled or disappeared. Pinochet's seventeen year old rule came to an end in 1990.



COLOMBIA

Why did Colombia have a war of thousand days?



Colombia is named after Christopher Columbus, the legendary Italian explorer. The country was colonized by the Spanish and its people gained independence in 1819.

Colombians were deeply divided in political thought even after independence. On the one hand, there were the Conservatives who believed in a strong central government and limited voting rights. On the other hand, were the Liberals who demanded universal voting rights and powerful regional governments.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the price of coffee came down creating an economic crisis. In addition to it, Manuel Antonio Sanclemente, a Conservative leader was elected as

the president. The Liberals accused the Conservatives of using unfair means to win the election. This sparked a conflict which later turned into the War of Thousand Days.

The Liberals were supported by Venezuela with money and arms. The war ended in 1902, with both the parties signing a peace treaty; but the conflict didn't really stop here.

The rift between them intensified further which led to a period of unrest in 1940 that is now called 'The Violence'.

How did Argentina get its name?

The Spanish explorers who conquered Argentina gave it the name we all know today. The name is derived from the Latin word for silver-*argentum*.

The Spanish came to Argentina hoping to find rich deposits of silver, but they couldn't find any. But they were not disappointed altogether. The newfound country had lush pasture land and fertile soil.

Argentina's treasures turned out to be the land itself! A lot of migrants came to the country for farming and raising cattle. Argentina's economy was built on the meat and leather industry. It exports large quantities of frozen meat even today.

Did Argentina fight many wars?

Beyond football and pasturelands, Argentina has a history of gory wars. After gaining independence, Argentina faced a situation of political turbulence and a series of military governments.

The period 1976-83 is known as 'The Dirty War' in its history. There was a seven-year campaign by the Argentine government which aimed to chase out Leftism. Thousands of suspected Left wing activists simply disappeared from Argentina.

In 1982, Argentina went to war with Britain. This time, the dispute was about the ownership of Falkland, an island in the South Atlantic. The Argentines believed that the British had seized the island from them in the nineteenth century. The Falkland war started on 2nd April 1982. The British naval fleet under instructions from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher fought against Argentina till the Argentines surrendered on June 14.

BRAZIL

Why did the Portuguese go to Brazil?

The Portuguese did not go to Brazil with the dream of establishing a settlement. In fact, Brazil provided a safe place to hide for the Portuguese king who had fled from the French army. Surprising, isn't it?

In 1808, the French army led by Napoleon invaded Portugal. King Joao IV ran off to Brazil and later established his empire

Buenos Aires

there. The empire came into the hands of his son, Pedro afterwards.

King Pedro was a kind ruler and he granted independence to Brazil and abolished slavery. This act angered the wealthy landowners of Brazil. As a result, the royal family was forced to flee back to their motherland.

Modern Brazil is not just about carnivals and natural wonders. The country now has an unstable economy. Brazil was once one of the leading industrial exporters in the world. It faced a great economic crisis in 1929. Though it recovered from the impacts of depression, the country had to face inflation for many years after 1980. The crisis became severe in 2014 as the trade balance was not maintained. In addition, the household consumption increased and the investments were low. The changes in the economic policy of the country too had an adverse effect.

One and Only

Brazil is the only country in South America that speaks Portuguese.

Rio de Janeiro

Lima

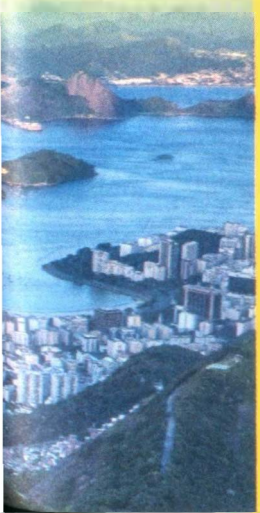
PERU

Who were the rulers of Peru?

The stories about the rulers of Peru is as old as the story of the Inca civilization. The Inca civilisation flourished in Peru in the 1400s. A Spanish conqueror named Francisco Pizzaro destroyed the empire of the Incas and established a settlement. This happened in 1532 and Spain ruled Peru for the next 300 years. The Spanish rule was largely oppressive and the natives rebelled against their rulers. After a series of violent battles, Peru earned its independence in the 1820s.

Peru has had times of trouble after independence. From the mid twentieth century, Peru's government alternated between democracy and military regimes. A Maoist group called the Shining Path gained power over Peru in the 1970s. However, they faded away after their leader Abimael Guzman was captured in 1992.

Peru is a peaceful democracy since the 1990s. The people of Peru are required to vote by law!



EUROPE

Why does Europe have a significant place in world history?

Europe has had great influence on political history since time immemorial. The system of democracy as we know today was developed in Europe in about 450 BC.

People from this not-so-big continent went around the world and colonized it. Almost all the countries around the world would have a European link at one point or the other. At a point of time, European powers, especially Britain, Spain and Portugal controlled the world. These countries grew rich by exploiting Asia, Africa and the Americas.

The Great Wars of the world began in Europe. Both World War I and World War II had their roots in Europe. The tension between communism and capitalism was played out here primarily. This power struggle that took place between the communist and non-communist countries is known as the Cold War which finally witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Today, Europe has 51 independent countries and related territories. Armenia and Cyprus are considered to be in Europe though they are geographically located in West Asia.

SWEDEN

Stockholm

Who made Sweden famous?

Sweden was not known to the world till Vikings explored this land. Sweden prospered under the rule of Vikings who fought wars to expand their territory.

By AD 1000, several provinces united and established a nobility. Later in 1389, Sweden, Denmark and Norway united under the Danish Queen Margaret. This is known as the Kalmar Union. The Kalmar Union was short-lived: internal conflicts erupted between these countries and they broke off the agreement.

Nutral

Sweden remained neutral during World War I and World War II.

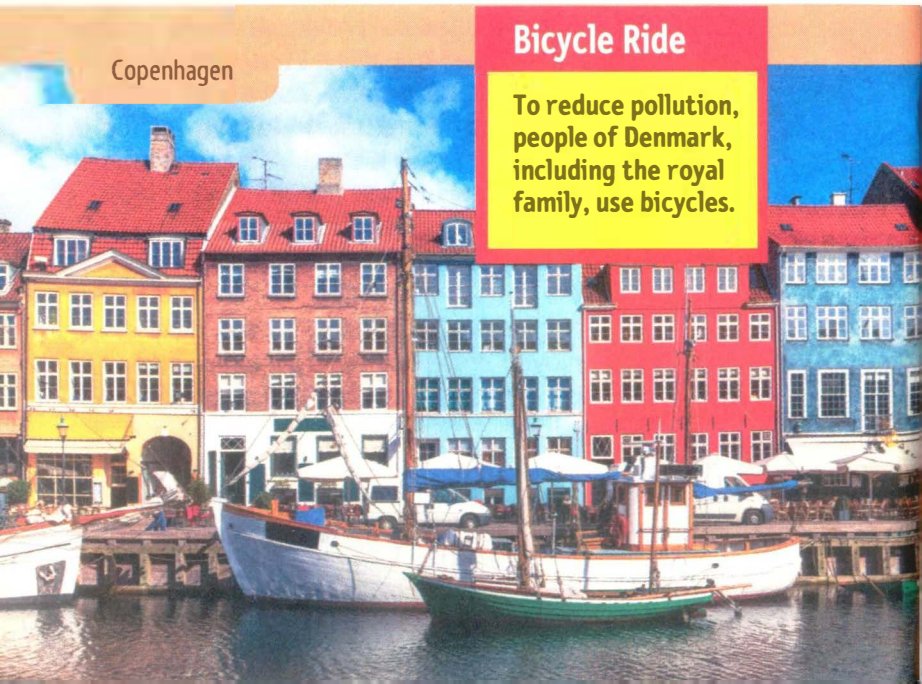
The credit of building modern Sweden goes largely to King Gustav Vasa. Sweden enjoyed great cultural developments in the 18th and 19th centuries due to its contact with France. The economy picked up during World War I. Sweden is now one of the wealthiest nations of the world. The monarch is still the head of the country, but the real power lies with the elected representatives of the people.

FINLAND

Which countries controlled Finland?

Finland has strong neighbours who played a key role in shaping its history. It is a small nation positioned between Sweden and Russia and has often been a tool to prove the power of its neighbours. Sweden started to gain control over Finland from the 1100s which was later lost to Russia in the Napoleonic War.

Russia invaded Finland in 1809 and it became part of the Russian Empire. The Russian Revolution paved way to Finland's independence. It became a free country in 1907. After gaining liberty, the people tried to establish a monarchy. This attempt was a failure; the country later became a republic with the president as the head of the State. The Soviet Union occupied Finland again during World War II. Though the country lost some of its territories, it regained freedom after the war.



Helsinki

DENMARK

Who ruled Denmark before it became a monarchy?

Denmark has one of the most peaceful societies in the world with high standards of living. It is one of the least corrupted democracies.

Denmark was once ruled by the Vikings. The Vikings were replaced by the Danish monarch. Remember the Kalmar Union that we discussed in the history of Sweden? After the dissolution of this treaty, Denmark went to war against Sweden and lost much of its territory.

The country fought wars with Germany too. Denmark lost Schleswig to Germany, but it was regained after the First World War. This happened in the 1920s, leading to the creation of modern Denmark.

Germany occupied Denmark during the Second World War, but it was freed after the war. Today, Denmark is a constitutional monarchy with a vibrant representative democracy.

BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS and LUXEMBOURG

Which countries are known as the Low Countries?

Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg are collectively known as the Low Countries because most of the land lies near the coast of the North Sea. These countries came together for trade and became rich in the Middle Ages.

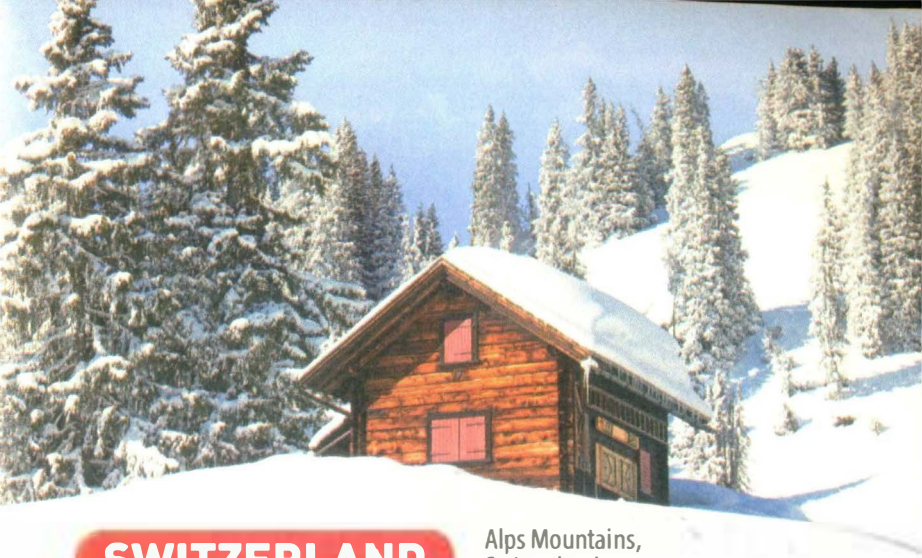
The French dukes controlled this area for a while. But, they chose to join the Habsburg family in the 1500s, which ruled over Spain and Austria. Peace did not prevail in the Low Countries even though they were rich. There were a series of wars and they were ruled by foreign powers time and again. Belgium broke free from Netherlands in 1830 and Luxembourg gained independence in 1867.

In 1948, these countries joined again in an economic union. This union is referred to as Benelux, a combination of the first sounds of the three countries. Benelux was a founding member of the European Economic Community.

Canals

The canals in Netherlands freeze in winter. Once they freeze, they are used for ice skating!

Amsterdam



Alps Mountains, Switzerland

SWITZERLAND

Which country is known as Helvetia?

Around two thousand years ago, Switzerland was called Helvetia when the Romans conquered the land. It was initially inhabited by a group of people known as Helvetii who named it so. Along with its new name, Switzerland is still known as Helvetia in some places.

After years of war against their oppressive rulers, the Swiss gained independence in 1648. This was a time when wars swept across Europe between several countries. But Switzerland chose to remain neutral, avoiding the violence and brutality of war. A constitution was established after the wars under the mediation of Napoleon, but it did not last long. It subsequently became a republic with twenty-two cantons.

Switzerland remained neutral during World War I and II. The Swiss concentrated on industrialisation and economic growth. The peaceful atmosphere of the country has attracted many organisations like the UN and the WHO to establish their offices in the country. Switzerland today is a federal democratic state with peace, stability and prosperity.

Mountain Lake, Andorra

ANDORRA

What is special about Andorra?

Andorrans haven't been at war for almost a thousand years now. In the 1930s, France occupied the country to prevent the effects of the Spanish Civil war from entering Andorra. Though Andorrans declared war against Germany in the Second World War, they didn't really send anybody to fight.

According to legends, Andorra was founded by Emperor Charlemagne, a Frankish ruler. Andorrans are believed to have helped the emperor in defeating the Moors. The French Count of Foix and the Spanish Bishop jointly began to rule Andorra from 1278. Andorra practiced this feudal system until it was replaced by democracy in 1993. Even today, Andorra has two official heads - the Bishop of Urgel and the President of France.

ALBANIA

Why did Albanians face a ban on travels outside the country?

Long before, Albania was a part of the Turkish empire of the Ottomans which lasted for at least three centuries. The country gained freedom in 1912.

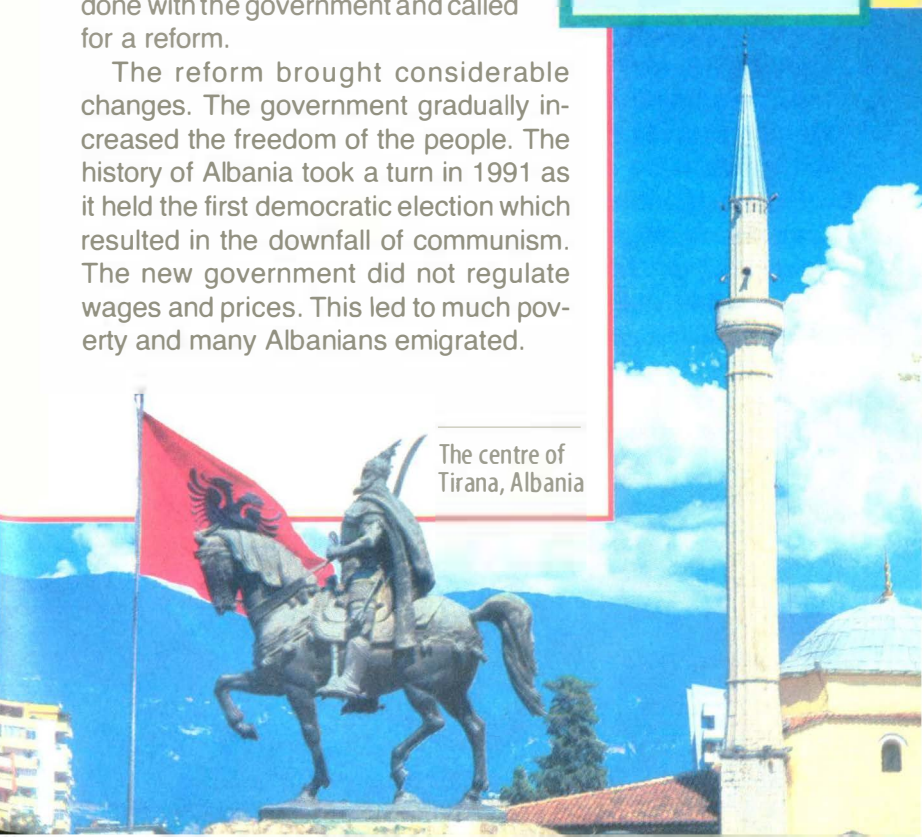
In 1946, Albania became a communist country under the

leadership of Enver Hoxha. Albania functioned as a socialist state, with business and farmlands under the control of the State. Outside influence was seen as a threat to the stability of the government. To overcome this, Hoxha imposed a ban on travels outside the country. Albanians were not allowed even to own a TV. It also banned practice of any religion. Hoxha died in 1985, but the oppression did not stop. Frustrated, Albanians were done with the government and called for a reform.

The reform brought considerable changes. The government gradually increased the freedom of the people. The history of Albania took a turn in 1991 as it held the first democratic election which resulted in the downfall of communism. The new government did not regulate wages and prices. This led to much poverty and many Albanians emigrated.

Oldest of all

The oldest lake in Europe is found in Albania. The lake, known as Ohrid, is also one of the world's oldest lakes.



The centre of Tirana, Albania

ITALY

How was modern Italy formed?

Italy played a key role in shaping the modern world. The great rulers of the Roman Empire hail from Italy. Modern Italy did not exist till 1861. Until then, this region had small provinces spread across the Italian peninsula.

Amid the country's numerous small cities and states, the city of Rome remained pre-eminent because it was the centre of the Roman Catholic Church. After a series of wars against the rulers led by Mazzini and Garibaldi, these provinces united to form the kingdom of Italy in 1861.

The united Kingdom of Italy took a different turn when Benito Mussolini, a fascist dictator gained power. He led Italy to the Second World War. In 1947, after Mussolini's era, Italy became a democratic republic.

Fifth

With almost 61 million inhabitants in total, Italy is the fifth most populous country in Europe.

Venice

Why is the Italian Renaissance important?

Towards the end of the 14th century, the great minds of Italy kick-started a new era. In contrast to the Middle Ages, all spheres of life underwent a dramatic change. Individual achievements were praised highly. The individual was regarded with great reverence and this influenced paintings, architecture, politics, culture and even science.

Scientists started to work in a different way to know the rules of nature. These developments as a whole are known as the Renaissance in world history. It started in Italy and spread to the rest of the world. No wonder Italy has the highest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Italy is of utmost cultural and industrial importance. Rome holds multifarious monuments of historical and cultural importance including the Colosseum, the Pantheon and various other marvels of art and architecture. Italian cuisine is one of the most preferred foods around the world. Who would not like pizzas and pastas! Milan in Italy is regarded as the fashion capital of the world and the home of various fashion brands like Gucci and Prada. Italy is also famous for automobiles like Ferrari, Lamborghini, Maserati and Fiat.

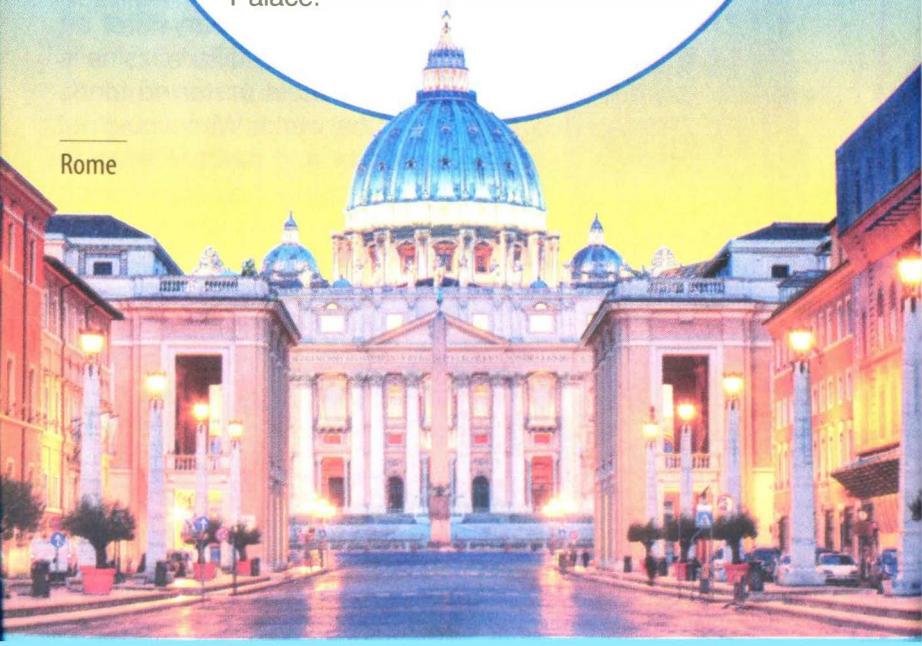
Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy

VATICAN CITY

Which is the smallest independent country in the world?

The smallest independent country is completely surrounded by the capital of Italy. Engulfed by Rome, Vatican City is the smallest country and the seat of the Roman Catholic Church. It is headed by the Pope.

Italy once had a large area ruled by the Catholic Church. All that remains of this region is the city of Vatican. Modern Italy agreed to grant independence to Vatican in the year 1929. The population of the country consists almost entirely of religious officials and others who work within the Papal Palace.



Rome

SPAIN

Cudillero

Who ruled Spain before it became a Catholic kingdom?

Spain is one of the greatest colonial powers the world has seen. Almost five thousand years ago, the Celts and Phoenicians settled in Spain. It became a part of the Roman Empire in 200 BC.

The Romans ruled Spain for centuries until they were invaded by the Visigoths in AD 475. The Moors from North Africa later conquered the kingdom. Christian kings gradually gained control over Spain, expelled the Moors and made it a Catholic kingdom.

After its unification, it was a period of expansion for Spain. The Spanish conquered most of the Americas and set up colonies. But their superpower status began to recede in the 1600s.

In the 19th century, Spain was defeated in the Napoleonic War. Napoleon's brother became the king for a brief while, but was soon overthrown and the Spanish monarchy was restored.

The Spanish Civil War started in 1936 and after three years of turmoil, the Spanish Republic was established. Francisco Franco became the new leader who ruled the country till 1975.

IRELAND

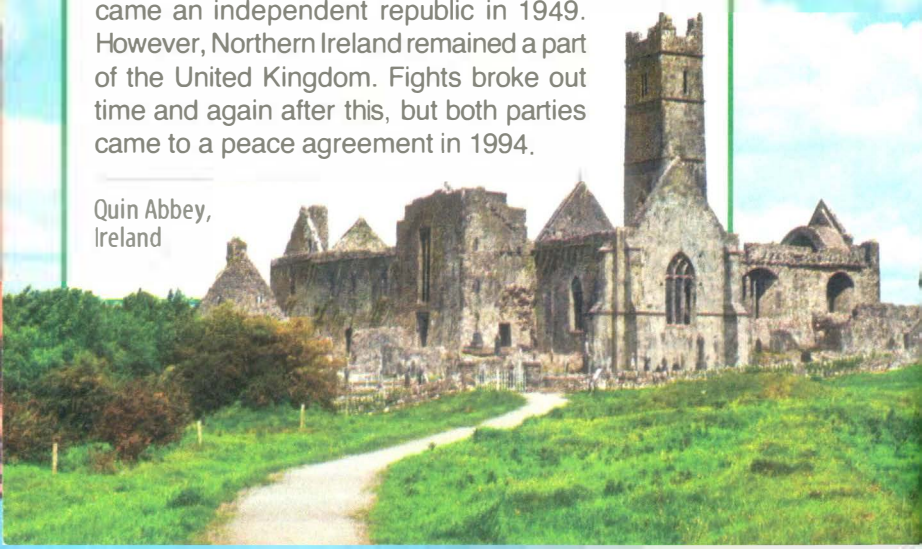
Why was Ireland divided?

Ireland was a single kingdom before it was divided into the Republic of Ireland, a free country and Northern Ireland, a part of the United Kingdom. Before the English came, Ireland was ruled by the Celts and the Vikings. The major chunk of Irish history is about its struggles against the English.

The English invaded the land under King Henry II in the 12th century. They first occupied the lands around Dublin and later spread northwards. During the 1600s, northern Ireland was given to the Protestants from England and Scotland. The rest of Ireland was predominantly Catholic. The Protestants soon outnumbered them in the north. This angered the Catholics in the south who demanded a split from the Protestant north. The split took place in 1921; the south was renamed as the Irish Free State. The Irish Free State became an independent republic in 1949. However, Northern Ireland remained a part of the United Kingdom. Fights broke out time and again after this, but both parties came to a peace agreement in 1994.

Eire

The Republic of Ireland is known as Eire in Irish.



Quin Abbey, Ireland

UK

London

How did the United Kingdom take shape?

We all know about Queen Elizabeth II, the monarch of the United Kingdom which is one of the most powerful nations in the history of the world. Centuries before Queen Elizabeth came to the scene, the United Kingdom was not a single entity, but separate kingdoms of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. These kingdoms later merged together to form the first industrial nation in the world.

The Middle Ages were marked by a series of wars across Europe. However, England and Wales managed to unite in the mid 1500s. Later, Scotland joined this entity in 1707. Thus, Great Britain was born. Ireland joined the union, but after the Irish Civil War, the Republic of Ireland became independent, leaving the province of Northern Ireland with the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom that we see in the map today was formed in 1801. The nation is not very large, but holds a diverse population of different cultures.

How did Britain become a superpower?

Britain became a world superpower with the help of the sea and seafarers. It had a huge naval fleet which helped it to create a vast empire overseas. Britain started off with trade and ended up being the rulers, expanding the empire by establishing colonies wherever possible.

The colonies of Britain were rich in natural resources which they looted. The wealth amassed from the colonies made Britain the richest country of the world and the territorial control gave them enormous power. By the 1980s, industries became the backbone of Britain's economy.

Britain's involvement in World War I and II affected its economy. Most of its colonies emerged as independent countries by the 1960s. This led to the weakening of its political power. It suffered greatly in the 2008 financial crisis as well. Though it has lost its old glory, the UK is still powerful diplomatically.

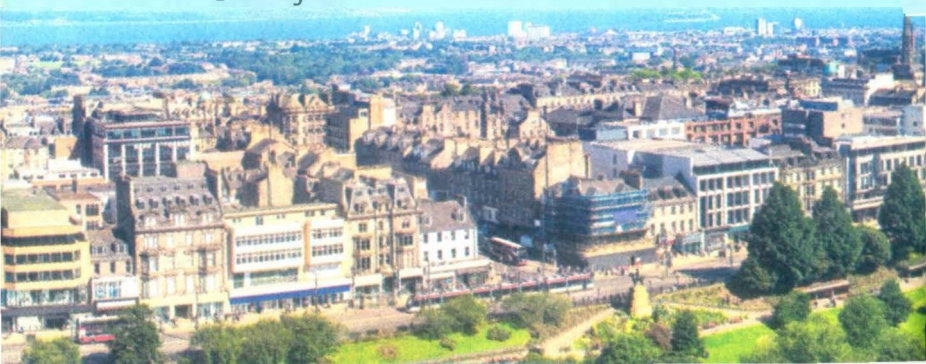
PORTUGAL

How did Portugal gain democracy?

Portugal is unique in many ways; it is one of the first global empires and the first empire to have maritime relations with other parts of the world. Portugal also had the longest dictatorship in Europe. Like many other European countries, Portugal was under the control of the Greeks, Romans and the Moors subsequently.

During the 15th century, the Portuguese started marine ex-

Edinburgh



Lisbon

plorations towards the Far East and South America. They enjoyed monopoly over the spice trade back then. Remember Vasco da Gama, the first explorer who came to India 'by sea? He was Portuguese.

Portugal became independent from Spanish rule in 1668 under the Treaty of Lisbon. During the First World War, the Portuguese sided with the Allies. Unrest prevailed in the country which led to a military regime headed by Antonio Salazar. This autocratic regime is known as Estado Novo regime. A peaceful movement called Carnation Revolution later established democracy. Much later, Portugal joined the European Union in 1986.

It's Special

Portugal has had the same defined borders since 1139, making it the oldest nation-state in Europe.

GERMANY

Why was the Berlin Wall built?

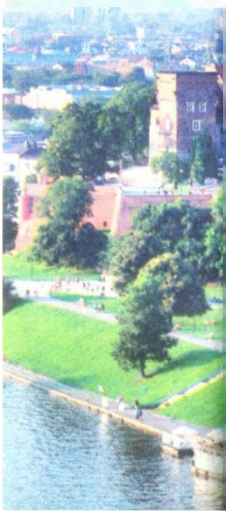
Germany is notorious for its involvement in World War I and II. The defeat of Germany in World War I left the country in crisis. Germany was asked to pay a heavy compensation to France and Britain. This devastated the country economically.

In addition to that, hyperinflation swept the nation; people were starving and the government was in utter chaos. The Nazis came to power in this vulnerable situation. They promised to make Germany great again under the leadership of Adolf Hitler.

Hitler's efforts to create a master race was catastrophic. He could not create a glorious Germany; it lost again in World War II. The country was divided into four zones, one each under the US, Britain, France and the Soviet Union respectively. The Berlin Wall was built in 1961 which divided the country into East and West Germany. East Germany had communist rule while West Germany was backed by the US. The wall stood for thirty years and was finally demolished in 1990, reuniting East and West Germany.

Berlin

Krakow



POLAND

What happened to Poland during World War II?

Poland was once the centre of the Slavic empire. Ironically, this country disappeared from the map without a trace during the Second World War.

Poland was occupied by Nazi Germany during the war years. It dehumanised the Polish and killed thousands of them. The history of Poland during the war years is about gas chambers, gunshots and fear.

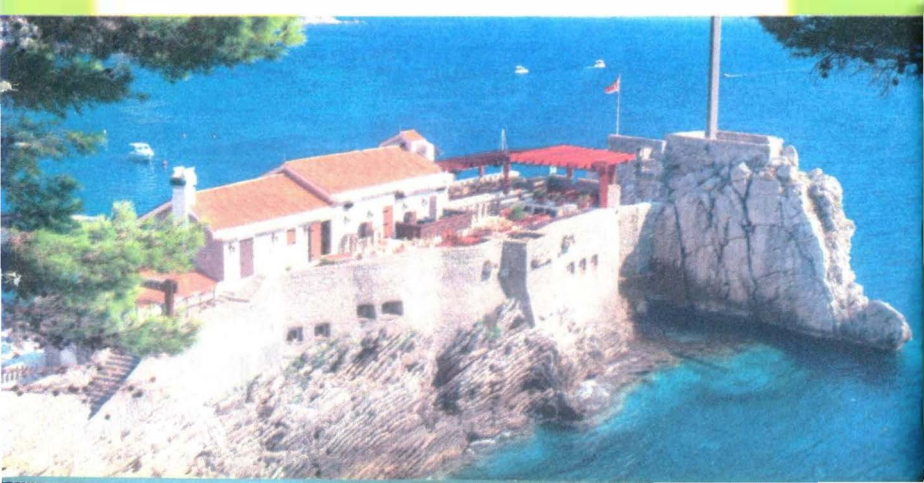
After the war, Poland was governed by the communists of the Soviet Union. This period was not much different from the previous regime. Poverty prevailed; the wages were low and the living conditions pathetic. This led to strikes and riots that demanded better wages and political reform. In 1989, the Solidarity Workers Party won the elections thus bringing democracy in place. People enjoyed greater freedom, but the economic crisis was not completely solved. Poland joined the Schengen Area in 2007. As a result, the country borders were dismantled and people now enjoy greater freedom of movement within the European Union.

YUGOSLAVIA

Why was Yugoslavia split?

If you see the world map before the 1990s, you would get a totally different picture. In it, you have Yugoslavia, a large country that included Croatia, Bosnia- Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Montenegro. These Balkan states were either ruled by the Ottoman or the Austria-Hungary Empire before its unification.

Though Yugoslavia was torn apart during the Second World War, it pieced itself together in 1945 under a communist government. But its people found it difficult to live with such religious and ethnic diversity. This tension led to war which later split the country into five different nations in the 1990s. They are Croatia, Bosnia- Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Slovenia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 2003, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was renamed as Serbia and Montenegro. Now, we have five different nations in place of Yugoslavia.



Budva

HUNGARY

What did communism do to Hungary?

Budapest

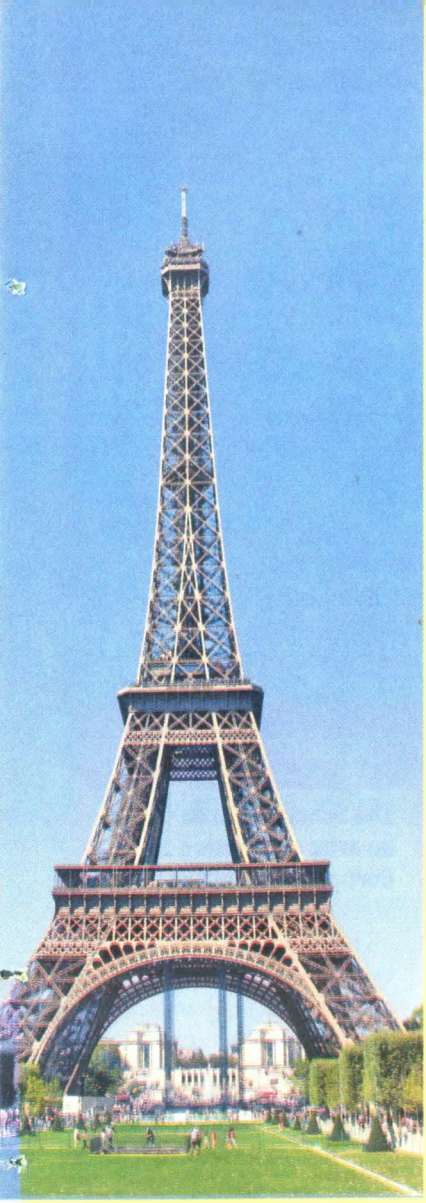
The Magyar kings were ruling Hungary when the Turks took over. This happened in the 1600s. Later, the Turks were driven out by the Habsburgs, the rulers of Austria. Austria-Hungary was defeated in World War I after which, Hungary proclaimed its independence.

Hungary was taken over by the communists in 1948. A period of rapid industrialisation followed. It was accompanied by poor wages and strict government control. Fed up of this oppression, Hungarians started a revolt in 1956. But the Soviet Union crushed the rebellion using cruel means. Many of the protestors were killed.

The country did not have democratic elections till 1990. Jozsef Antall became the first democratically elected president after the Second World War.

The Schengen Area

The Schengen Area is an area comprising 26 European states that have officially abolished all passport and all other types of border control at their mutual borders. The area is named after the 1985 Schengen Agreement. 22 of the 28 EU member states participate in the Schengen Area.



Eiffel Tower, Paris

FRANCE

How did France become a republic?

At first, France had monarchical rule. Now, France is governed by what is known as the 'fifth republic'. The transition from an absolute monarchy to a liberal republic is a story of revolution and war. France was first ruled by the Celts, who were followed by the Romans, the Moors and the Franks. Its story was pretty much the same as its European neighbours.

The Middle Ages of France was marked by a series of long wars with England. France lost the Hundred Years War which left the country in debt. Much later, in the 18th century, the dissatisfied peasants revolted against the monarchy, leading to the French Revolution. The king and queen were executed and finally Napoleon Bonaparte took over the country.

Napoleon redesigned the nation. He conquered most of Europe before he was defeated at Waterloo by the British. During World War II, Germany occupied France, leading to much chaos and unrest. After the war, France sided with the Capitalist West to rebuild the nation.

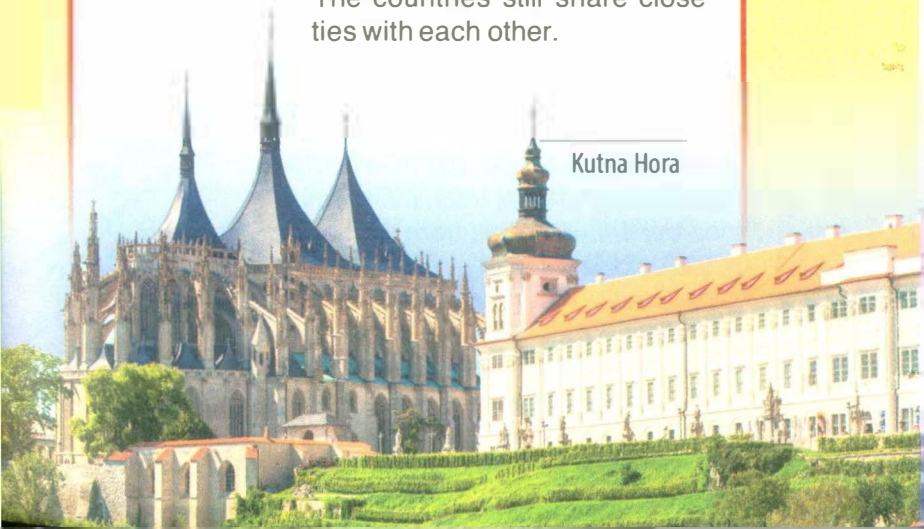
CZECH REPUBLIC

Why did Czechoslovakia split into two countries?

The Czech Republic and Slovakia are separate countries today. Earlier, these countries were a single entity under the name Czechoslovakia.

In the year 1918, Bohemia united with its neighbour Slovakia to form an independent republic. An oppressive communist government ruled Czechoslovakia from 1948. The situation changed dramatically when Alexander Dubcek became the leader. He lifted the censorship on media and liberalised the country. This period of reformation is known as 'Prague Spring', but it did not last long. The Soviet Union invaded the country in 1968.

The country held a democratic election in 1989. Both the Czechs and Slovakians had different interests as a result of which Czechoslovakia was split into two independent countries. This peaceful separation is often known as the 'Velvet Divorce'! The countries still share close ties with each other.



Kutna Hora

ASIA

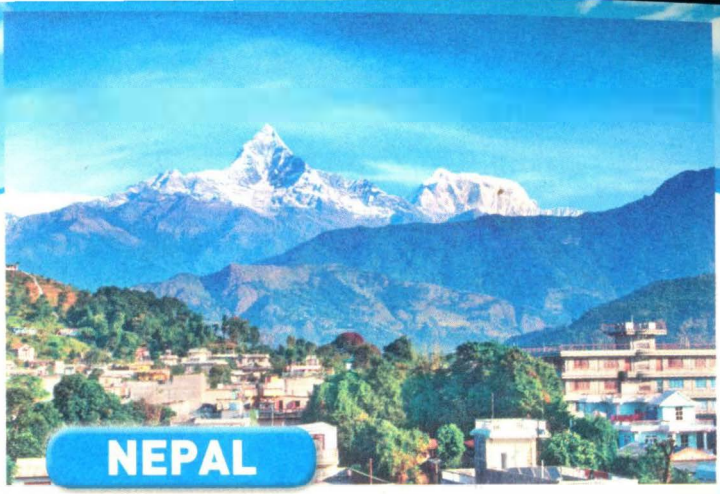
Which is the most populated continent in the world?

We all know that Asia is the largest continent, covering almost one third of the total land surface of the earth. Asia holds the largest population as well.

The Asian landmass is unique; it has the highest peak - Mount Everest- and the lowest elevation - Dead Sea- of the world. Russia is the largest Asian country while Maldives is the smallest. Asian culture is as varied as its geography. It has more than 2,300 languages.

Asia saw the birth of great civilizations. The 1600s brought in enormous changes in Asia as the Europeans set foot in the continent. By the 1800s, many of the Asian countries were colonized by European countries, who looted and exploited their wealth. Rebellions and wars later, many countries freed themselves from the hands of the colonizers.

Asia now includes more than 45 countries including India, China, Thailand, Jordan, Sri Lanka and many more.



NEPAL

Pokhara

What is the story of Nepal?

What is the image that you get when someone talks about Nepal? High mountains covered in snow, the busy temple streets of Kathmandu, steaming momos, stories about Yeti, the abominable snowman and much more. Tourism has brought much attention to this country. In fact, Nepal runs on the money obtained from tourism.

Nepal, as we know today was unified by the Gorkha kingdom in the 18th century. The Shah Dynasty established itself in the country with some help from the British Empire. It was never colonized, but it served as a buffer state. In 1990, the people of Nepal protested for a democracy as a result of which king Birendra gave up his powers. Nepal became a constitutional monarchy with the king as its head.

Various social issues existed in the country that led to the Nepalese Civil War. The war which started in 1996 lasted for ten years and in the end, a democratic government took shape. A new constitution was announced in 2015, according to which, Nepal is a federal secular parliamentary republic.

THAILAND

Was Thailand colonized by the Europeans?

Thailand has had contacts with many countries like India, China and Burma. In fact, the first settlers of Thailand came from southern China. But the country has never been colonized by Europeans.

Thailand was earlier known as Siam. The Chakri dynasty founded their kingdom in 1782 with Bangkok as their capital.

The twentieth century saw the power alternating between the military and democratic forces. After years of unrest, an elected coalition government was set up in the 1990s.

Rong Khun temple, Thailand

Thailand has a mixed population, including refugees of the Vietnam War who were offered assylum here.

SINGAPORE

Who founded the modern-day Singapore?

Legends say that Singapore was founded by a Malay prince who set foot on the island in the 13th century. We don't know if this is true, but the modern-day Singapore was born in 1819. Sir Stamford Raffles, a trader with the British East India Company founded the island country.

Many Chinese people came to the island for work and trade. For almost hundred years, Britain ruled the country. Though Singapore joined the Federation of Malaysia in 1963, it backed out to become a separate nation in 1965. Singapore is one of the richest southeast Asian countries whose money comes from international trade, banking and shipping.

Singapore transitioned to a first world country from a third world country under the leadership of their first Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew.

Help

Water supplies in Singapore are actually piped from Malaysia.

Singapore

MALAYSIA

Who ruled Malaysia before its independence?

Throughout its existence, Malaysia was occupied and ruled by different countries and powers. The early settlers of Malaysia came from China. Before the Britishers set foot, the country was occupied by the Arabs, Portuguese and Dutch. The Britishers came in the 1800s and ruled the country for almost a century.

During the Second World War, Japan occupied Malaysia. After the war, the communists started a terrorist campaign against the British and Malaysia finally gained independence in 1957. Since then, it has a democratic system of government. It has a federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy.

Tropical beach, Philippines

PHILIPPINES

How did Philippines get its name?

The name Philippines has got a Spanish connection. The Spanish colonized the country in 1565. The name Philippines was given to commemorate their king Philip II.

The Filipinos are descendants of Malays who settled in the islands around 3000 BC. The Spanish established a colony and enjoyed its agrarian wealth for around three hundred years. After the Spanish - American war, the USA bought Philippines for 20 million dollars. Thus America got its ownership! This transfer of ownership happened in 1891 and almost half a century later, Philippines gained independence under the military leadership of President Marcos. Marcos was ousted later on charges of corruption.

Coconut

Philippines is one of the world's largest producers of coconut.

Kuala Lumpur

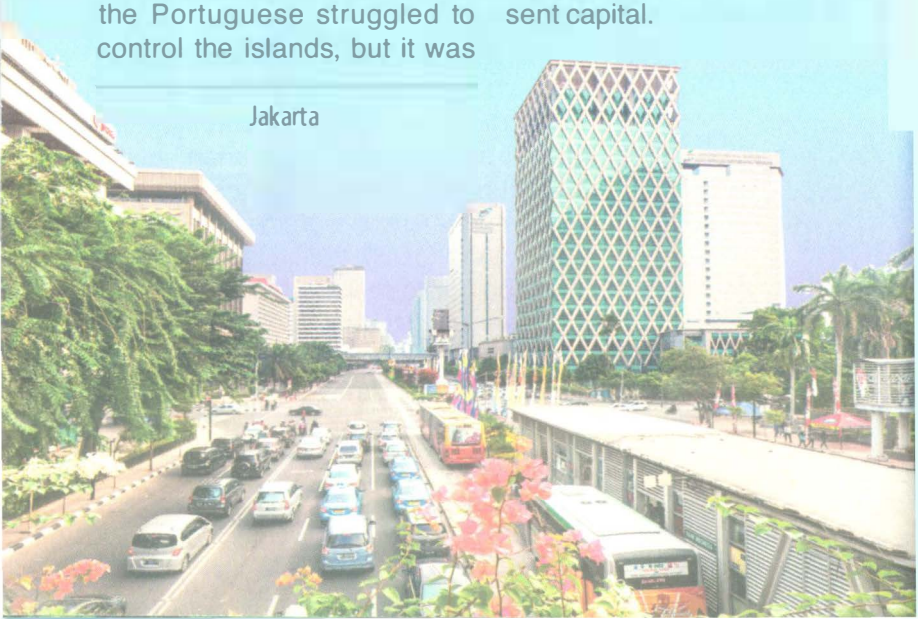
INDONESIA

Why did Indonesia attract people from around the world?

If you are planning to visit Indonesia, be ready to be welcomed by the invigorating aroma of spices. Indonesia had a huge market of spices and was a part of several trade routes. The strategic location and of course the spices attracted seafarers across the world.

Indian and Arab merchants had trade relations with Indonesia before the Europeans entered the scene. The British and the Portuguese struggled to control the islands, but it was the Dutch who could succeed in it: they ruled Indonesia from 1798 and brought in a sense of unity among the islanders. A century after the Dutch rule, Indonesia gained independence and became a republic in 1949, with Achmed Sukarno as the first president. The army became a powerful force after independence.

In recent years Indonesia was very much in the news because of the earthquake in the Indian Ocean and the tsunami that followed, which devastated the archipelago in 2004. It is once again in the news as the country is planning to move the capital out of Jakarta, the present capital.



Jakarta

Colombo

SRI LANKA

What is the new name of Ceylon?

Have you ever heard your grandparents talking about Ceylon? Ceylon is the old name of Sri Lanka: the name was given by the British when they colonized it. Lanka is known to all of us from the story of *Ramayana*.

The Sinhalese from India conquered the island and named it Sinhala. Later, Tamils also from India invaded Sinhala pushing the Sinhalese southwards. This has been a source of conflict since then. The country was later invaded by the Portuguese, Dutch and British. After World War II, the island gained independence from the British. This happened in 1948 and after two decades, the country adopted its new name - Sri Lanka.

The old tensions between the Tamils and Sinhalese erupted again in the 1980s leading to a bitter civil war. The war killed thousands and many fled from their motherland.

The conflict ended in 2009 with the victory over Tamil Tigers.

UAE

When was the United Arab Emirates formed?

Before the 1970s, the seven emirates under the UAE were separate states in the Persian Gulf, who fought against each other. Some traded spices, pearls and perfumes while the others smuggled them.

By the 1820s, the British became a major trading power in this re-

Burj Khalifa

It's Huge

The Expat community makes up almost 80 per cent of the entire UAE population.

gion. To avoid competition, they made the emirs sign a truce. They stopped warfare among themselves in return for the protection offered by the British.

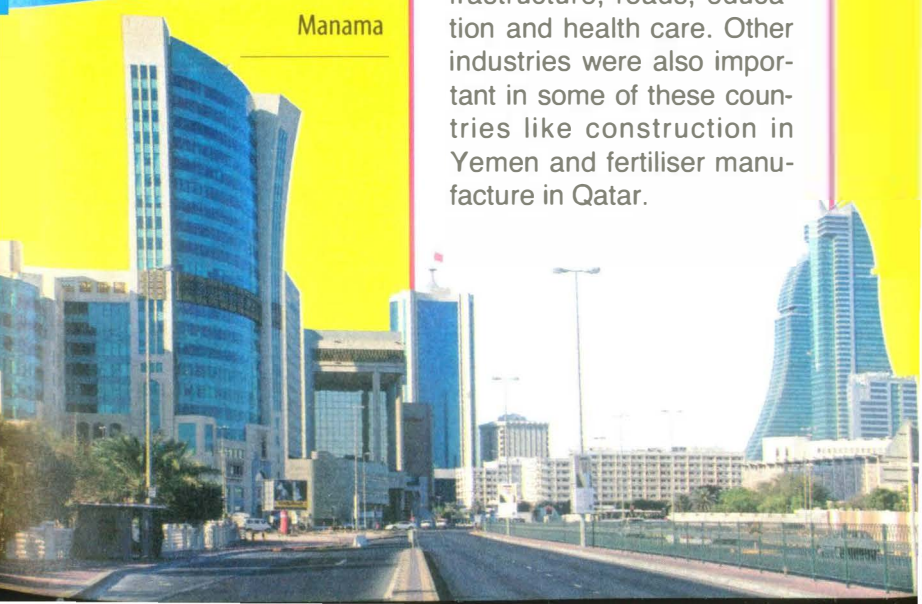
In 1971 the emirs of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ajman, Fujairah, Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain joined under the banner of the United Arab Emirates and gained independence. Ras Al Khaimah later joined the emirates in 1972.

BAHRAIN

Which countries experienced a boom after the discovery of oil?

Some countries in the Middle East suddenly bagged attention as they had rich deposits of oil. Till then, they were largely seen as sandy stretches of barren land, inhabited by tribesmen. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Iran enjoyed the oil boom.

Oil generated huge amounts of money which was used for developing infrastructure, roads, education and health care. Other industries were also important in some of these countries like construction in Yemen and fertiliser manufacture in Qatar.



Manama

KUWAIT

Why did Kuwait request British protection in 1899?

Kuwait City

The Arabs of Anaza built a port in Kuwait Bay in the 1700s which is now known as Kuwait city. Until then, this land was uninhabited. The Turks tried to invade the port and the local people sought protection from the British. Britain took the responsibility of Kuwait's defence up until the 1960s. The country became independent then.

Oil has brought riches to the country since 1946. It also provided jobs to a lot of migrants, especially from India. The people of Kuwait led a peaceful life till the 90s when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Kuwait was accused of taking away Iraq's petroleum; this accusation was followed by invasion. The troops from the US and UK drove out the Iraqis. Iraq responded with bombings and many oil wells were set on fire.

War Zone

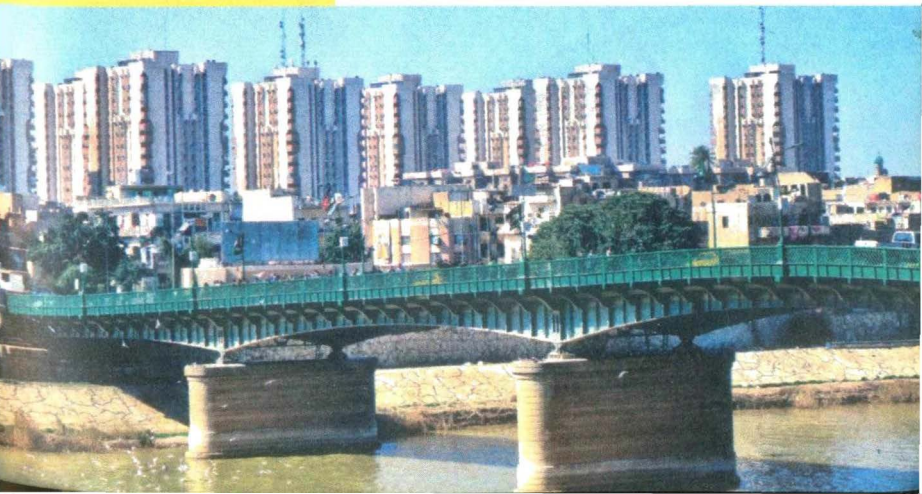
The Bollywood movie *Airlift* starring Akshay Kumar is based on the Iraq-Kuwait war. The film narrates the story of the airlift of Indians from Kuwait in 1990.

IRAQ

Why was the oil from Iraq banned by the UN?

Saddam Hussein's rule of Iraq was marked by wars. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait led to the Gulf War which it lost. Oil was a huge element in these invasions and Iraq had caused considerable damage to Kuwait by the end of the war. The UN imposed a ban on oil from Iraq. This was to make sure that Iraq pays reparation to Kuwait. The ban was largely in effect till 2003.

Iraq is an Arab state which was first ruled by Sumerians. They were followed by the Persians, Greeks, Arabs and Turks who conquered the land and established empires. Britain took some control over Iraq after them. The country got independence in 1932. Oil was discovered after 1950 which brought prosperity to the land.



Baghdad

IRAN

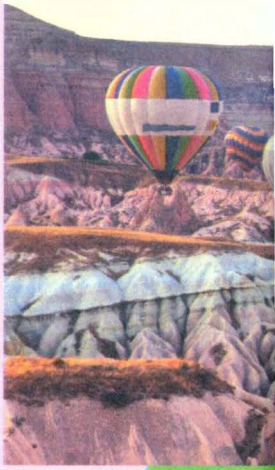
Which country was known as Persia?

The name Persia is familiar to us from the tales of the *Arabian Nights*. Persian carpet is still a favourite household accessory and Persian architecture and crafts are still very famous. But where actually is Persia? Modern day Iran was called Persia.

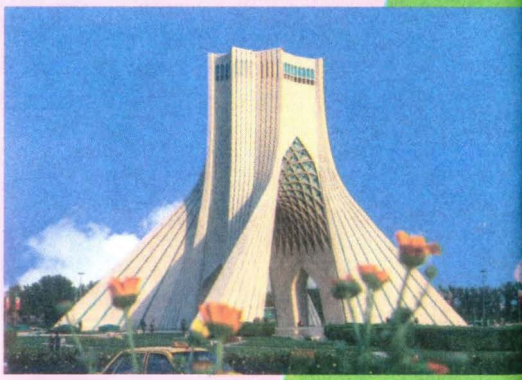
Iran was invaded by Genghis Khan in the 1200s and Mongol rule was later replaced by the Safavid dynasty. Russia and Britain then competed to take control over Persia during the 1800s.

The country was a monarchy and flourished under the Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi in the 1900s. The developing oil industry paved way to economic improvements; but not everyone welcomed this development. Under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Shah was overthrown. This movement is known as the Iranian Revolution. The revolution was a period of chaos, limited freedom and strict religious laws. Life in Iran during the revolution was portrayed in Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel *Persepolis*.

The 1980s saw a war between Iran and Iraq over oil . After the war, a new government came to power in the 1990s.



Cappadocia



Azadi Tower in Tehran

TURKEY

Who is known as the Father of Turks?

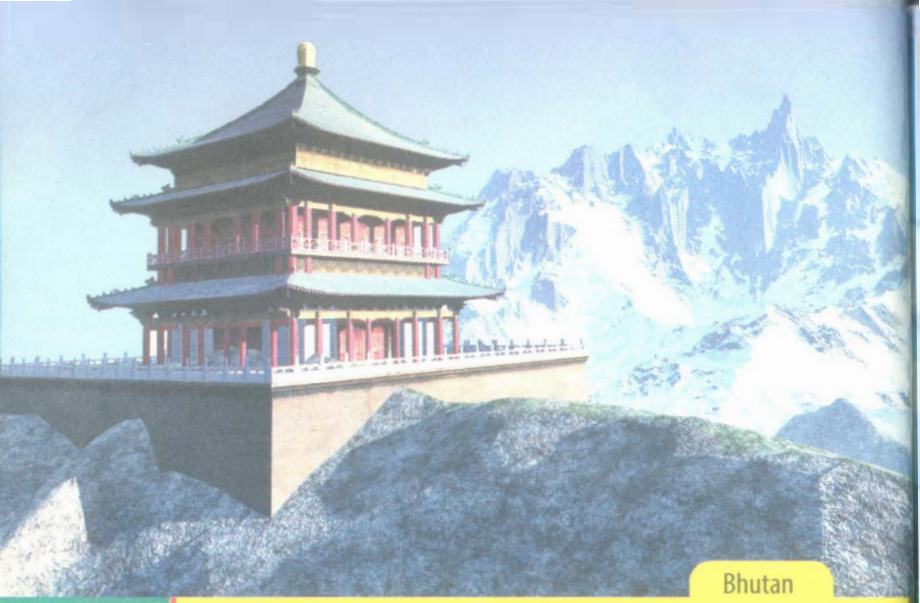
Mustafa Kemal, a military leader turned president is fondly known as Ataturk or the Father of Turks. Like our Gandhiji, his face is printed on the Turkish currency notes.

Turkey gained independence and became a republic in 1923. Mustafa Kemal who became the president abolished the existing legal system and made the country secular. Women were granted voting rights. His efforts to raise the country to the status of a modern nation gave him the title 'Ataturk'.

Turkey was ruled by several empires including the Greeks, Persians, Romans and Seljuks. Turkey was at the height of its glory during the reign of the Ottoman empire.

Do you know?

Istanbul, the capital of Turkey is the only city built on two continents- Asia and Europe.



Bhutan

BHUTAN

Which country is known as the Land of Thunder Dragon?

As their flag shows, Bhutan is known as the Land of Thunder Dragon. Squeezed between India and China, Bhutan is a tiny country in Asia which gives more importance to Gross National Happiness rather than Gross Domestic Product. It is also the first country to ban the production and sale of tobacco.

Bhutan was ruled by the Tibetans in the 1500s. It is one of the last surviving Himalayan kingdoms. The country was protected by the British from the 1800s. Though it gained independence in 1949, Bhutan maintains strong diplomatic ties with India. India manages its foreign affairs and helped develop infrastructure. Bhutan became a constitutional monarchy in 2008 and its king is known as the Dragon King.

RUSSIA

What is the story of the USSR?

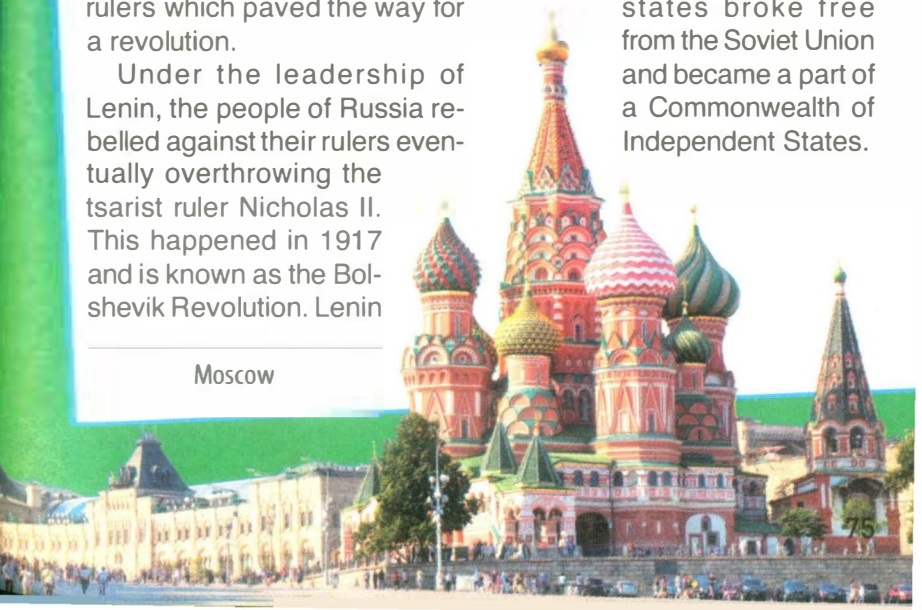
The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, commonly known as the Soviet Union, was the largest country when it existed. We now have 15 independent states in its place including Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Russia. How did the Soviet Union take shape? Why did it collapse? Let's take a look.

It all started in today's Russia. Long before, Russia was a part of the Mongol Empire and was later ruled by the tsars. After long years of tsarist rule, people became unhappy about their rulers which paved the way for a revolution.

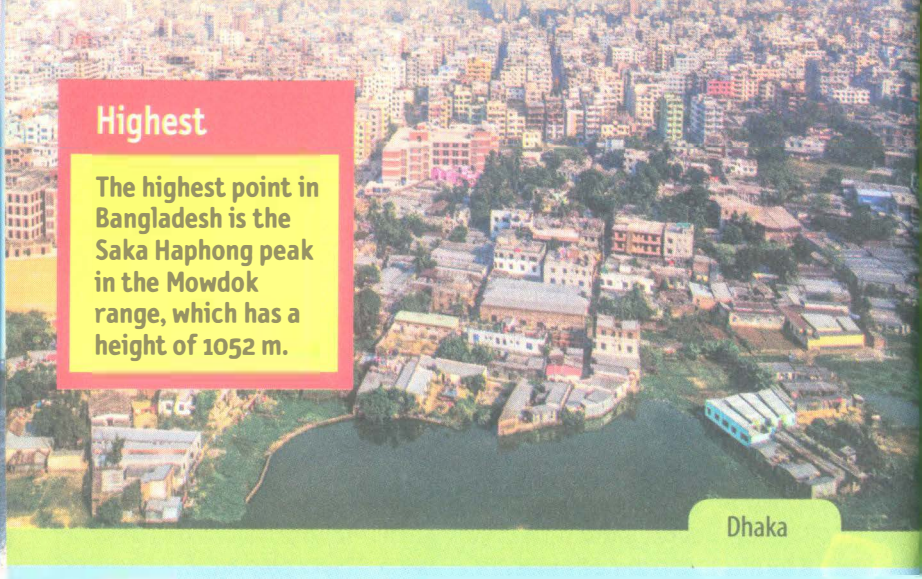
Under the leadership of Lenin, the people of Russia rebelled against their rulers eventually overthrowing the tsarist ruler Nicholas II. This happened in 1917 and is known as the Bolshevik Revolution. Lenin set up a communist rule after the revolution, forming the USSR.

After Lenin, Joseph Stalin ruled the USSR from 1929 for more than twenty years. His rule was marked by terror and violence. Personal freedom was restricted to a great extent and people were not allowed to protest. The people were fed up of communism.

In the 1980s, Gorbachev became the president. He granted more freedom to the states and its people. Around the same time, some republics started to demand independence. By the 1990s, most of the states broke free from the Soviet Union and became a part of a Commonwealth of Independent States.



Moscow



Highest

The highest point in Bangladesh is the Saka Haphong peak in the Mowdok range, which has a height of 1052 m.

Dhaka

JAPAN

Why was Japan bombed by the US?

Japan was ruled by various emperors and warlords before the 19th century. Things started to change in the 19th century as Japan aimed to expand its borders to become a powerful empire. It waged wars with China and Russia. Japan occupied many territories including Korea by the end of the 1900s.

The Great Wars of the world marked an important chapter in the history of Japan. In the first World War, Japan sided with the US and attacked German colonies; the country then had trade ties with the US. Things took a turn when Japan chose to side with the Axis powers in World War II; Japan, along with Italy and Germany stood against the Allies and gained control over most of Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands.

In 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbour. This angered the US and the very next day, it declared war against Japan. The US responded by bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the first ever atomic bombs, killing millions of people and permanently damaging their environ-

BANGLADESH

Who helped Bangladesh to gain independence?

Bangladesh has close connections with India. It was once part of India. During partition, Bangladesh became a part of Pakistan and was known as East Pakistan.

East Pakistan wanted to sever its ties with West Pakistan. A civil war broke in 1971 in which India fought on its side and it finally gained independence. Thus, a new country named Bangladesh was born.

The country has had various problems after independence, with poverty, famine and unemployment being the biggest issues. Bangladesh was torn apart by military regimes as well; it is now ruled by a democratically elected government.

ment. Japan surrendered in 1945 after the bombings and was occupied by the US till 1952.

Mount Fuji

KOREA

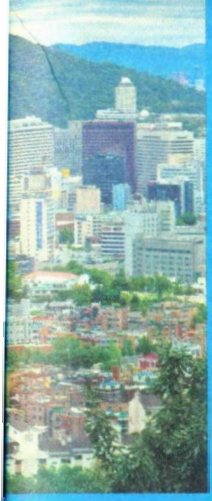
Why was Korea split into two?

Years ago, North and South Korea were a single country. World War II divided the country into two. How did this happen?

Japan occupied Korea from 1910-45. This came to an end with Japan's defeat in World War II. After the war, the northern half of Korea was occupied by the Soviet Union while the southern half was controlled by the US. The political differences in the two halves led to a horrible war; North Korea attacked South Korea. The war started in 1950 and ended three years later, killing millions.

North Korea is still ruled by a communist government, headed by Kim Jong-un. South Korea is now one of the fastest growing economies, and their cultural inputs are famous all over the world. Korea exports TV dramas, Pop music and movies to the world. The rise of Korean entertainment industry is known as the Korean wave and it contributes significantly to the country's economy.

Seoul



VIETNAM

What happened to Vietnam after the French rule?

Vietnam was colonised and ruled by the French for almost a century until the 1950s. The French rule came to an end when the communists took over the northern part of the country in 1954.

The country was soon split into North and South Vietnam with communists ruling the North. They wanted to gain control over the South as well. The anti-communists in the South rose against the communist guerrillas when they tried to take over the government. The conflict later turned to a twenty-year-long war. During the war, the North was supported by Russia and China while the South was backed by the US. The fighting got worse and in the end, the North won defeating the US troops. After the US troops left, Vietnam became one again in 1976.

Legend

The body of Vietnam's first president Ho Chi Minh was embalmed, and is on display in a mausoleum.

CAMBODIA

How was Cambodia affected by the Vietnam War?

Cambodia and Vietnam have one thing in common; both the countries were ruled by the French for almost a hundred years. Though Cambodia tried to remain neutral during the Vietnam war, the country was in trouble as the war spread across the borders. The country's peace was affected by the bitter fighting between the US troops and the Vietnamese communists.

After years of fighting, a new dictatorship took over the country in 1975. Khmer Rouge, a political party led by Pol Pot came into power causing considerable damage to the country. Both industry and agriculture collapsed as he forced town dwellers to farm the land; thousands died of hunger and diseases. Many were murdered as well. This is largely referred to as the Cambodian Genocide. Years of tyranny came to an end when Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978; the Khmer Rouge was overthrown and a new Vietnamese-backed government was established. The monarchy was restored later.

Angkor Wat

CHINA

Brilliance

Paper money was first invented in China.

How did Communist rule come to China?

Before communism took shape, China was ruled by empires after empires for at least 2000 years, the last of them being the Qing dynasty. China established itself as a great power in the 18th century.

By the end of the 19th century, its glory began to wane; China lost the Opium Wars to Britain, and the Treaty of Nanking gave the island of Hong Kong to Britain while unrest prevailed in the country. After the Boxer Revolution in the 1900s, Sun Yat-sen led the Republican Revolution in which the Qing Dynasty was overthrown by the People's Republic.

This could not bring in peace. China was invaded by Japan and war followed. In addition to it, the communists and nationalists struggled for power. Mao Zedong came to power in this situation. Mao spread communist ideas and influenced thousands of Chinese. After a series of campaigns, he established the People's Republic of China, overthrowing the Kuomintang government. Since then, China is a communist country.

INDIA

Why is India unique?

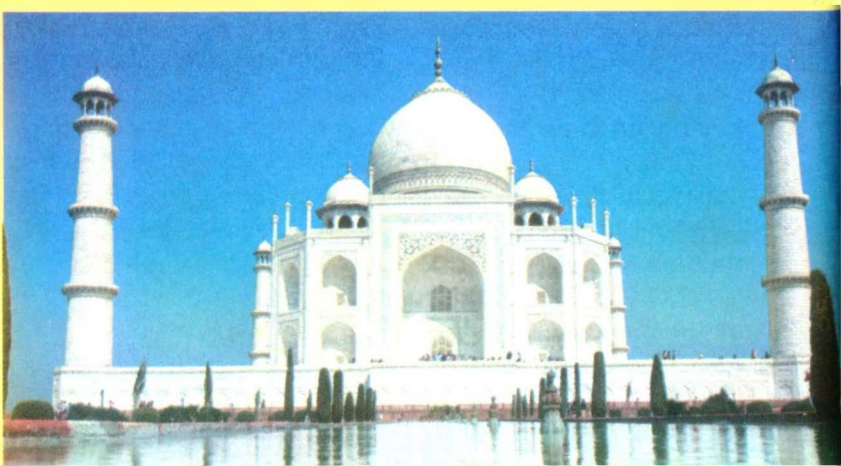
Let's talk about our motherland now. Apart from its history, what is special about our country? Here are some interesting facts about India.

India holds one of the largest populations in the world. India saw the birth of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. The concept of Zero originated in India: some branches of mathematics like calculus, trigonometry and algebra too.

The human calculator Shakuntala Devi who did a calculation of a random thirteen digit number is an Indian! Seems like India has a mathematic genius. The presence of water on the moon was detected by Chandrayaan I, an Indian lunar probe. Science Day in Switzerland is celebrated in the honour of our ex-President Dr. Kalam.

Shampooing is an Indian concept: in fact, the word has a Sanskrit origin. Diamonds were first mined in India. India is also credited with the development of that most popular board game- Snakes and Ladders. The game was developed to teach kids the concept of karma. Our country is a land of architectural marvels. Apart from the Taj Mahal and the Iron Pillar, we also have living root bridges in the northeast. India has more than 122 major languages. These are a few of the fascinating aspects about our country. The list is endless!

Taj Mahal



AFRICA

Why is the continent of Africa unique?

Africa is the oldest inhabited territory on Earth; human beings originated here! The continent was home to many ancient civilizations including those of Egypt, Congo and the Ashanti people, which flourished before Arab or European contact. Africa is noted for its jarring ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity. It's the second largest and the second most-populous continent.

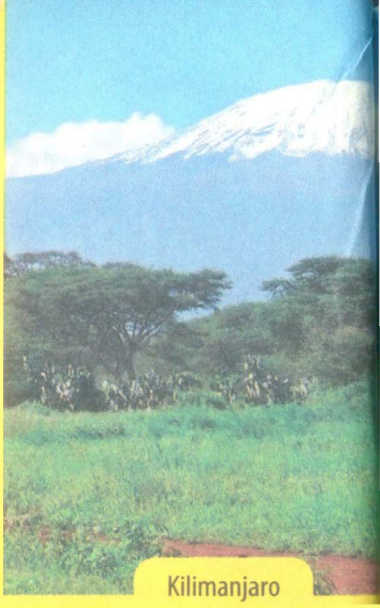
Africa has a bloody history. The continent has 54 countries and almost all of them were colonized by European powers up until 75 years ago. The colonizers became rich through mining and farming the colonies. The natives were treated like animals; they had to suffer the ills of colonization and slave trade. By the 1960s, African countries started gaining independence. Many of the white settlers refused to leave the continent which further led to complicated social evils like apartheid. Many countries had to go through long years of dictatorship, wars and natural calamities like drought and famine. Though major developments took place, Africa is still hampered by instability, violence, corruption and authoritarianism.

KENYA

Why is it said that Kenya has a long history of violence?

Many of the fossil remains of ancient Man have been found in Kenya. Kenya was colonised by the British in the 19th century. The colony did not have a peaceful atmosphere like many others.

The tensions between the British and the Kenyans led to the Mau Mau rebellion. Mau Mau was a secret nationalist group and they started ter-



Kilimanjaro

CAMEROON

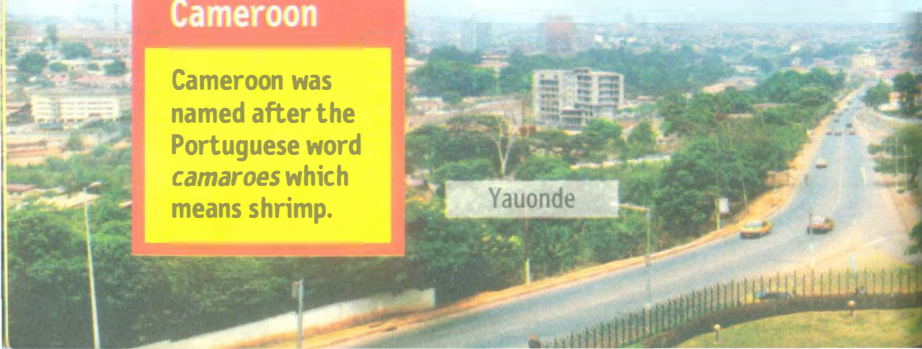
Which country is known as 'Africa in miniature'?

Cameroon is noted for its geographical and cultural diversity. It is known as 'Africa in miniature' for the same reason. The Sao civilisation flourished near Lake Chad in Cameroon and the southeastern rainforests were inhabited by the Baka hunter-gatherers.

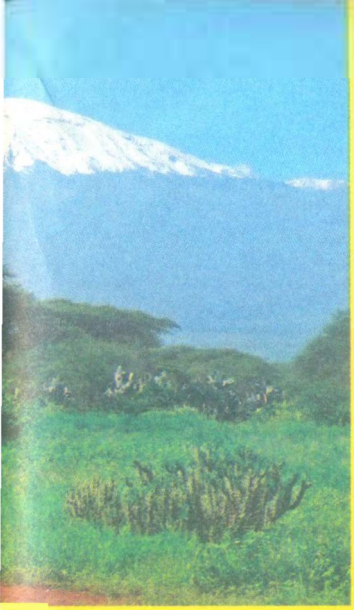
In the 1400s, the Portuguese sailed to the coast of Cameroon. These sailors traded ivory, rubber and slaves. Cameroon came under German rule in 1884; it became a colony known as Kamerun.

Cameroon

Cameroon was named after the Portuguese word *camaroes* which means shrimp.



Yaounde



rorist attacks in 1952 which lasted almost seven years. The country was in shatters, thousands of Kenyans died and the British finally granted independence to Kenya in 1963.

The first Kenyan president Jomo Kenyatta and his successor Daniel Arap Moi worked hard to unify its people. Peace was still far away from Kenya. Each elections were followed by episodes of violence; people were killed, property destroyed and citizens dislocated. A peace agreement signed by various political parties reestablished security and stability. Today, there are around fifty different ethnic groups in Kenya.

Modern Cameroon took shape in 1961. By then, the British and French had taken control; they unified a British and a French colony to give birth to the new country. It was later renamed as the United Republic of Cameroon in 1972. After a second round of renaming in 1984, it was known as the Republic of Cameroon.

The country was not free of internal tensions after its independence. There were constant conflicts between the English-speaking provinces and the French-speaking ones; it turned to a secessionist movement in 1990 and an insurgency in 2016.

SOUTH AFRICA

Why is South Africa a prominent country in the African continent?

Remember Nelson Mandela, the first black president of South Africa? He was jailed for 27 years because he fought for freedom. Before Mandela came to power, the country was ruled by a British minority government. Their rules strictly kept apart the two ethnic groups- the whites and the blacks.

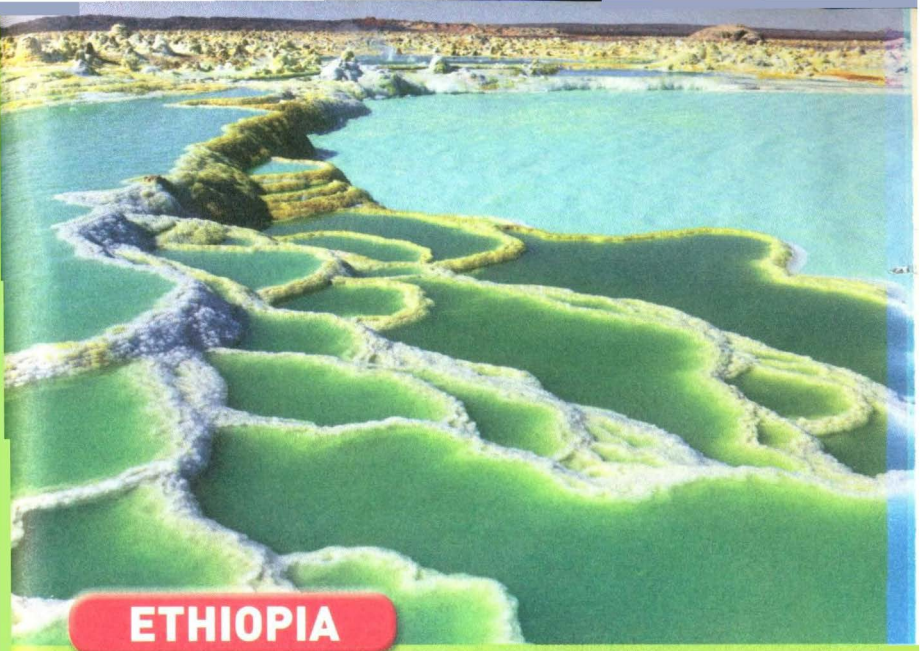
This system known as apartheid started in the 1950s; black people were forced to live in places called homelands with minimal opportunities for work and education. This created tensions. At first people started protesting peacefully; it later turned to violent riots and even massacres. After a lot of struggle and mass protests led by the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela, this practice came to an end in 1991.

South Africa has rich mineral deposits. Diamonds and gold were discovered there which attracted European fortune hunters.

Nuclear Weapons

South Africa is the only African country which produced nuclear weapons, which were voluntarily dismantled and destroyed.

Johannesberg



ETHIOPIA

Why is Ethiopia special?

Dallol Volcano, Ethiopia

Ethiopia was never colonised by anyone. In fact, it is the only African country which was never colonized. Italy occupied it twice, but they couldn't establish themselves as rulers.

Ethiopia is the most populous landlocked country and the second most populated nation in Africa. It is one of the world's oldest countries.

Legends say that Manelik, the son of King Solomon ruled this place. Different emperors ruled the country since then, even when the rest of Africa was controlled by other countries, the last emperor being Haile Selassie. He was overthrown in 1974 by a Soviet-backed military government.

The 70s was a turbulent time for Ethiopia. The government was corrupt, living conditions miserable and strikes and mutinies regular.

This was worsened by a severe drought and the inflow of refugees from Sudan. All these slowed down its economy.

MOZAMBIQUE

Is Mozambique a wealthy nation?

Mozambique's wealth lies in its natural resources. Unfortunately, it is still one of the poorest nations because of underdevelopment.

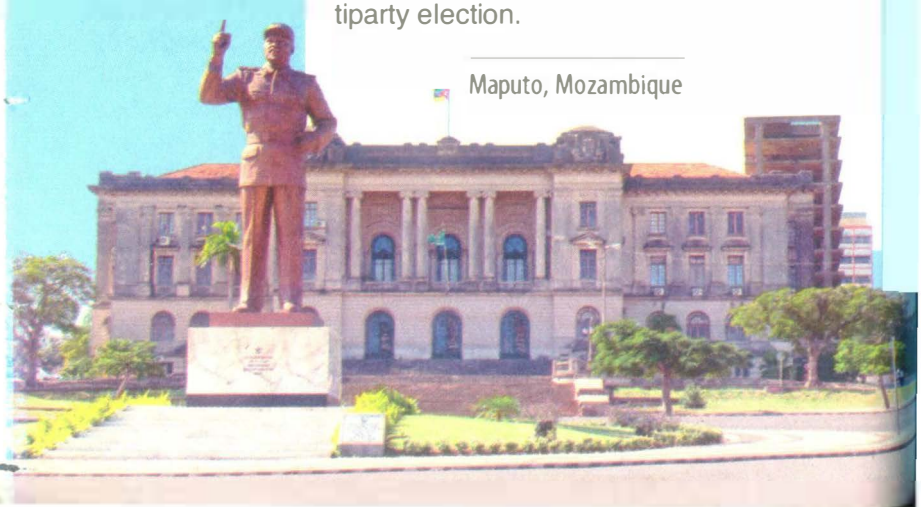
Long ago, Mozambique was a Portuguese colony. For five hundred years, Portugal got minerals and agricultural products from the country. After years of exploitation, a guerrilla army called Frelimo fought for independence following which Mozambique was declared as a free country in 1975.

After independence, Mozambique was torn apart by internal conflicts. Violence, disunity and natural calamities like drought weakened its economy.

The conflict formally ended in 1992 and it has remained a fairly stable presidential republic after its first multiparty election.

Highest

Monte Binga is the highest mountain in Mozambique.



Maputo, Mozambique

Victoria Falls

ZIMBAWE

Who dominated Zimbabwe after its independence?

Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980 and since then, veteran President Robert Mugabe dominated its political landscape for almost four decades.

Mugabe is a controversial figure. He was praised for his role in the freedom of his country, but his government was accused of dictatorship and economic mismanagement. He was ousted by a coup in 2017 and Emerson Mnangagwa became the new president.

The British ruled Zimbabwe for almost a hundred years before its independence. It started in the 1880s when Cecil Rhode established the British South Africa Company in Zimbabwe. According to archeological records, human settlements were present in Zimbabwe at least 100,000 years before British rule. The country was ruled by several kingdoms like the Kingdom of Mapungubwe and Kingdom of Mutapa.

Giza Pyramids

EGYPT

Why is it said that Egypt has a unique history?

Egypt is a land of antiquity. The civilisations and rulers of Egypt were highly regarded around the world.

The Nile river valley and delta were the home of the world's earliest urban and literate societies. The Pharaohs ruled Egypt for almost three thousand years through a series of native dynasties. They also had brief periods of foreign rule in between.

Unique

Cairo, the capital of Egypt is the largest city in Africa and the Middle East.

Europeans entered the scene in the later half of the 18th century. The British invaded and occupied Egypt in 1882, as they wanted control over the Suez Canal. The canal linked the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea and was an important part of sea routes. The country gained independence and took back the Canal in the 1950s.

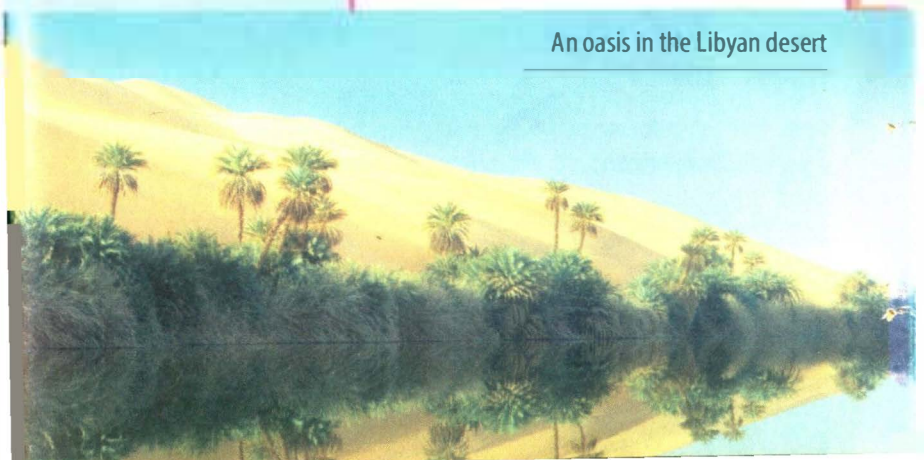
Hosni Mobarek was Egypt's long-time president who was overthrown by a popular uprising in 2011. Though the country has had many democratic elections since then, the role of the military in the government remains strong.

LIBYA

What is the story of Libya?

Before the 1920s, we did not have a country called Libya. In its place, there were three historical regions- Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan which were ruled by the Ottomans. The Italians later colonized this region and unified them to form a single colony. Thus Libya was born.

Libya got independence in 1951 under King Iris al-Sanusi. The king was overthrown in 1969 by a military coup and Colonel Gaddafi took charge of the country. He ruled for 42 long years till he was ousted by an armed rebellion in 2011. Gaddafi's rule shattered the country and it has been divided into competing military and political factions since 2014.



An oasis in the Libyan desert

GHANA

Which was the first sub-Saharan country to break free from colonial rule?

In 1957, Ghana gained independence from its British rulers and became the first country to break free from colonial rule. Its economy has flourished since then. Ghana has become a major African power due to its economic prosperity and democratic political system.

The first permanent state in modern day Ghana started in the 11th century. A home to many powerful kingdoms and empires, Ghana enjoyed the perks of stability and peace. The Kingdom of Ashanti was the most powerful among Ghana's rulers. Gold attracted settlers to Ghana, and many countries colonised this area for the same. It was also a hub of the Atlantic slave trade in which many like the Portuguese, Dutch, English and French participated. In the 1900s, Ghana came to be known as the British Gold Coast.

Second Popular

Akan is the most popularly used language in Ghana after English, spoken by nearly 67.1 per cent of the population.

Accra, Ghana

Rabat, Morocco

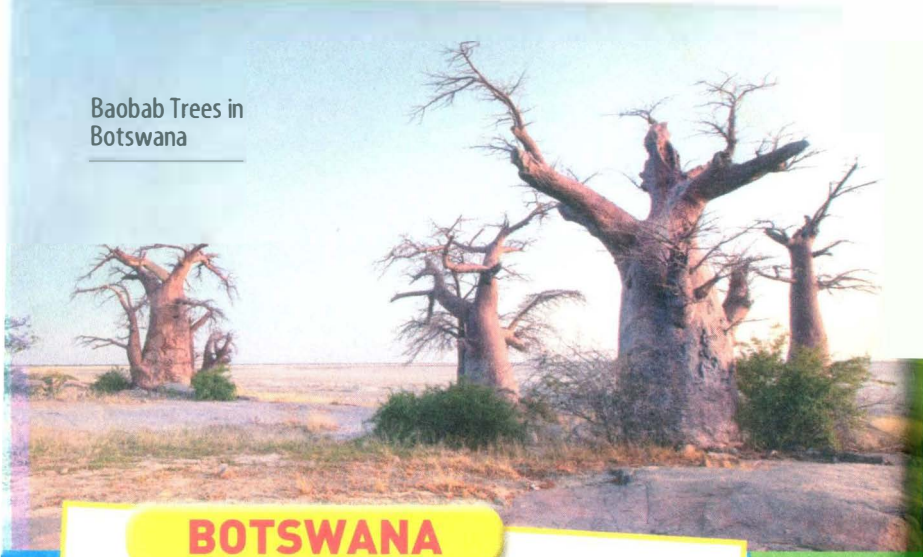
MOROCCO

Is Morocco the only monarchy in North Africa?

Africa is the homeland of many empires and kingdoms who practised powerful monarchical rule. Today Morocco is the only monarchy in North Africa; it is a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament. It is also the fifth largest economy in Africa.

King Idris founded the first Moroccan state in 788 AD. Since then, the country has been ruled by a series of independent dynasties. Morocco reached the heights of glory under the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties. The Alaouite dynasty came to power in 1631 and rules to this day.

Morocco was under French protection from 1912 to 1956. Sultan Mohammed became the king during this period. In 1961, he was succeeded by his son, Hassan II. He ruled for 38 years and played a prominent role in the search for peace in the Middle East. Ironically, he also ruthlessly suppressed domestic opposition.



Baobab Trees in Botswana

BOTSWANA

How did Botswana get its name?

Botswana is named after its dominant ethnic group, the Tswana. Botswana is Africa's oldest and longest continuous multi-party democracy.

The country held its first general elections based on the 1965 constitution that granted universal suffrage and it gained independence on 30 September 1966. Till then, Botswana was a British protectorate known as Bechuanaland.

Seretse Khama, a leader in the independence movement became the first President following the elections. He was re-elected twice. The eleventh election was the most recent which was held on 24 October 2014. Though one of the poorest and least developed countries, Botswana was largely stable.

Oldest and Largest

Botswana is the world's largest producer of diamonds .

MALI

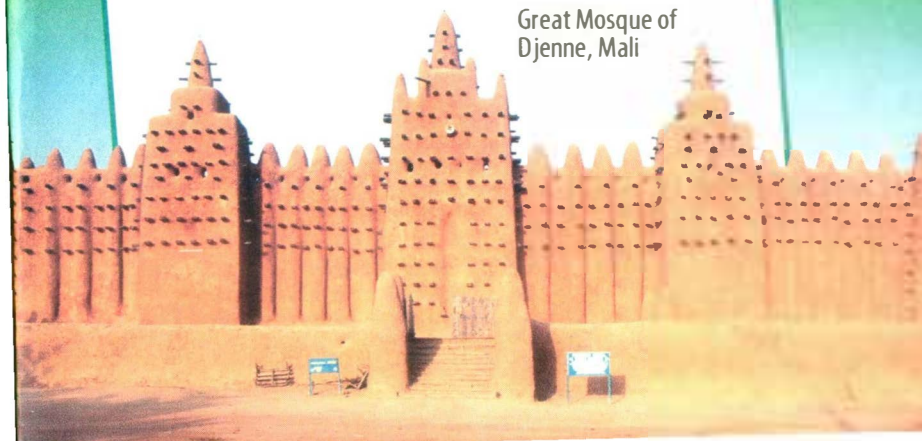
Why did the French launch Operation Serval?

The mystical place Timbuktu is very famous. The famous trading region is situated in modern day Mali. Mali was once part of the three great pre-colonial Sudanic empires: Ghana, Mali, and Songhai.

France seized control of Mali in the late 19th century and made it a part of French Sudan. In 1959, French Sudan joined with Senegal and became known as the Mali Federation, though later Senegal withdrew from the federation.

An armed conflict broke out in northern Mali in 2012; Tuareg rebels took control of a territory called Azawad. The issue was worsened by the involvement of the military. The French military launched Operation Serval in this context.

Within a month after its launch in January 2013, Malian and French forces recaptured most of the north.



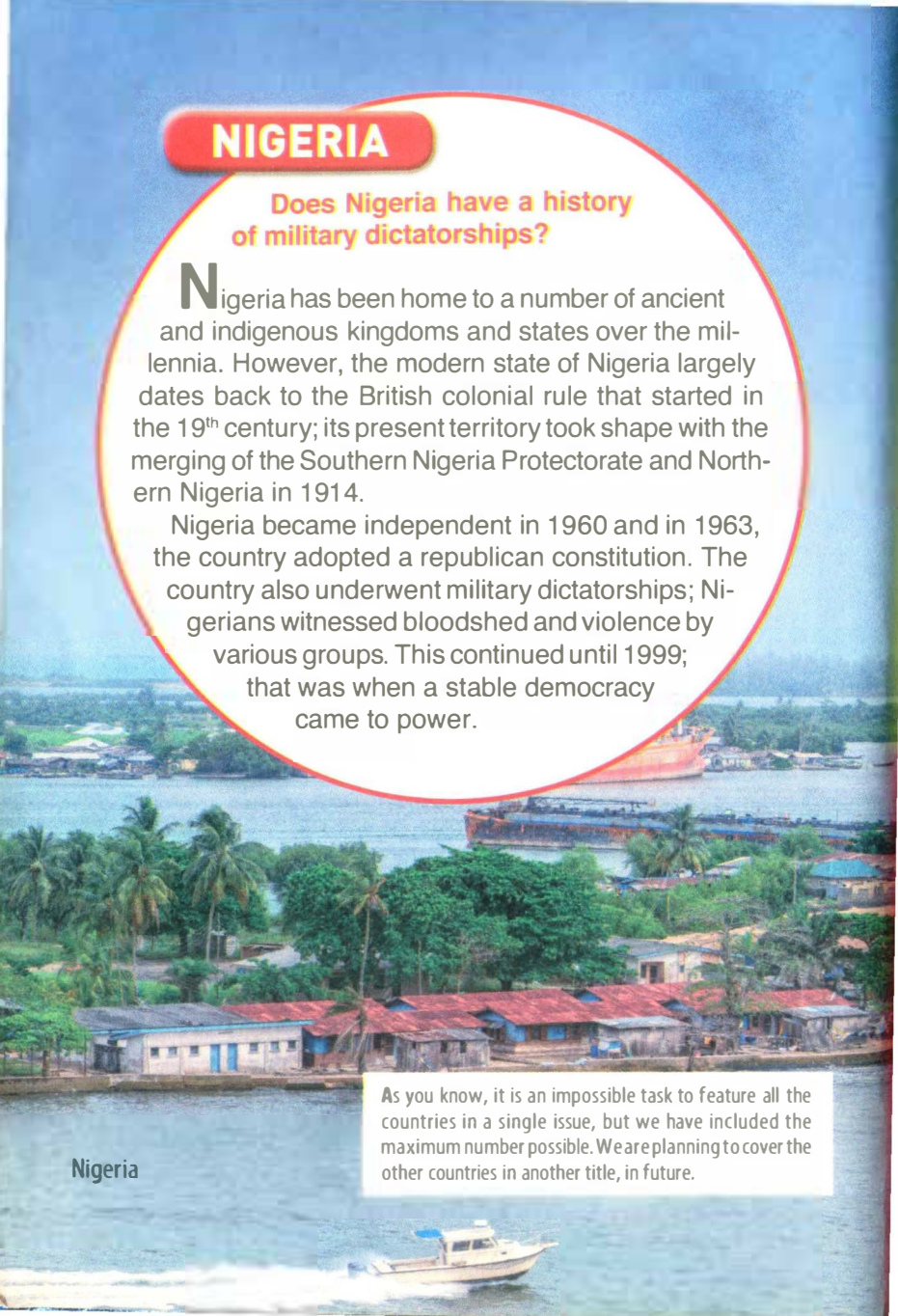
Great Mosque of Djenne, Mali

NIGERIA

Does Nigeria have a history of military dictatorships?

Nigeria has been home to a number of ancient and indigenous kingdoms and states over the millennia. However, the modern state of Nigeria largely dates back to the British colonial rule that started in the 19th century; its present territory took shape with the merging of the Southern Nigeria Protectorate and Northern Nigeria in 1914.

Nigeria became independent in 1960 and in 1963, the country adopted a republican constitution. The country also underwent military dictatorships; Nigerians witnessed bloodshed and violence by various groups. This continued until 1999; that was when a stable democracy came to power.



As you know, it is an impossible task to feature all the countries in a single issue, but we have included the maximum number possible. We are planning to cover the other countries in another title, in future.

MANORAMA

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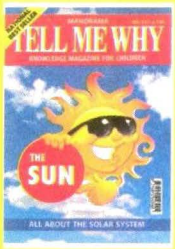

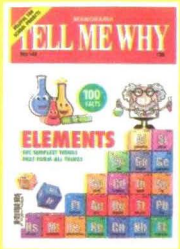

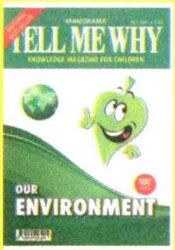

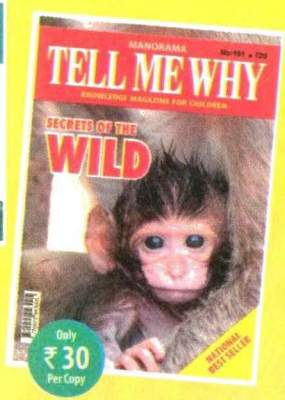

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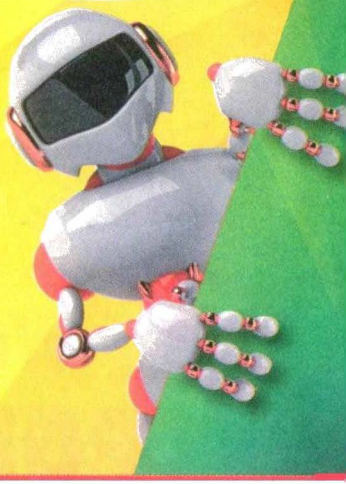

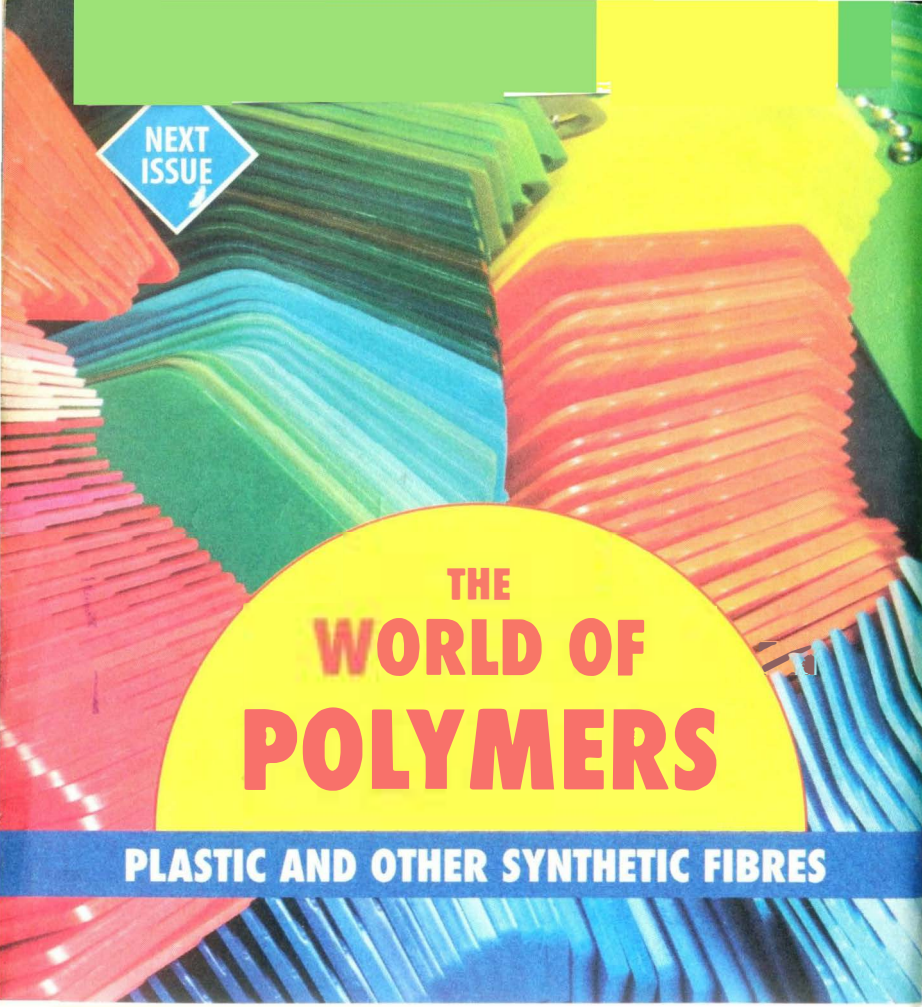
NEXT ISSUE
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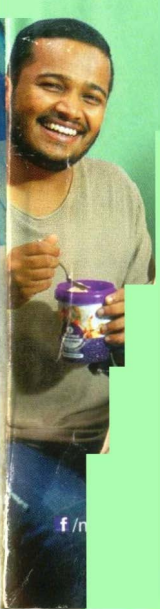
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